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THE SKEPTICS
OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

THE SKEPTICS OF THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE. By JOHN OWEN.

THE CIVILIZATION OF THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY. By Dr. JACOB BURCKHARDT. Translated by S. G. C. MIDDLEMORE.

LONDON: SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO.
NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO.

THE SKEPTICS

OF THE

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

BY

JOHN OWEN

RECTOR OF EAST ANSTEY, DEVON

Author of "Evenings with the Skeptics," "Verse Musings on Nature, Faith and Freedom;" Editor of Glanvil's "Scepsis Scientifica."

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LONDON

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO.

NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO.

1893

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'*Die Erde ist der grosse Felsen, woran die Menschheit, der eigentliche Prometheus, gefesselt ist, und vom Geier des Zweifels zerfleischt wird; sie hat das Licht gestohlen, und leidet nun Martern dafür.*'

Heine, *Religion u. Philosophie* (*Werke:* vol. xiii.), p. 307.

'*Il faut avoir ces trois qualités; Pyrrhonien, Géomètre, Chrétien soumis; et elles s'accordent et se tempèrent, en doutant où il faut, en assurant où il faut en se soumettant où il faut.*'

Pascal, *Pensées*, Ed. Faugere, vol. ii. p. 347.

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

TO

J. T. DANSON, Esq.,

OF GRASMERE,

I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE

THIS WORK

ON THE RENAISSANCE SKEPTICS:

THOSE OF ITS READERS

WHO KNOW HIM

WILL KNOW WHY.

JOHN OWEN.

East Anstey,
January 6th, 1893.

INTRODUCTION.

DIFFERENT causes of various kinds and degrees of cogency may exist for prefixing to a new work, that bugbear of the modern reader—an Introduction. Thus there may be reasons of undeniable expediency for dealing in a separate and initiatory chapter with the general outline or purport of the book. Among such reasons may be one or more whose special operation gives them a peculiar claim to consideration. The book may *e.g.* treat of a subject long misapprehended and maltreated by writers who have generally dealt with it in time past; or, like a stranger who can claim kinship among the circle into which he craves admission, the book may be so allied with an older work on the same or kindred subject that it is capable of receiving from it no small amount of reflected illustration in the way of references or extracts. Now both of these reasons combine as justifying an introduction to the present work. 1st. It is related to a work which the author published so far back as 1881 under the title of 'EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS.' It may indeed claim to be in some sort a continuation of that work—carrying down the history of the chief representative Skeptics to the period of the Renaissance and a century or more beyond.

By this, however, is not intended that such a continuity in the subjects of the two works need be emphasized or exaggerated, so that the essential independence, self-sufficingness, and conclusiveness of these two volumes should be deemed for a moment open to question. The Free-thought of the Renais-

sance is in reality a Free-thought of its own. Its Skepticism in Italy and France is largely an indigenous and native product. Originated by strange unforeseen causes, fostered by new and mysterious influences—political as well as religious and social—conditioned by circumstances, stimulated by movements and energies altogether peculiar to itself, the Skepticism of the Renaissance can always claim historical consideration in and for itself alone. It is unique in the history of human speculation. There can therefore be no hesitation in regarding the theme of these volumes as independent, as standing aloof in its complete amplitude and entirety from, *e.g.*, the Free-thought of Scholasticism and Mediævalism as well as from that of modern European History. Unlike most commotions and upheavals in the history of human thought—which we might conceive not incapable of repetition at least in part—it stands absolutely alone, a kind of ἅπαξ λεγόμενον in the continuous utterance of progressive humanity; and it is just this isolated magnificence which renders the culture of the Renaissance, as an epoch and product deserving attention, autonomous and independent.

The visual range and power of the man who emerges from prison, and surveys for the first time a broadly extended landscape outside its walls, is necessarily a different faculty exercised under different conditions, from the restricted, half-blinded vision which his former confinement alone permitted. This truth is not essentially lessened or impaired by the fact that the original structure of the organ remains the same; since it is its ocular power, its correlation to its environment and the light which that environment supplies, the extent and kind of visual consciousness, or the sensibility it is capable of inducing—these are the qualities that constitute eyesight, and these are wholly modified by the supposed change from imprisonment in a dark cell, to the liberty of outlook over a vista unbounded on all sides. The thoughtful reader who compares *e.g.* an average treatise of Jerome's or Augustine's

with a work of Dante's or Petrarca's soon becomes aware of the essential and overwhelming difference in his literary and speculative surroundings. In type, temperament, emotional and spiritual susceptibilities, etc., the men, though parted by centuries, are by no means dissimilar; but in passing from the culture of the Latin Fathers to that of the Renaissance leaders he feels as if he had suddenly entered a new world, and this feeling of novelty is not lessened by what is equally true, that this new world, in harmony with its name, is in great part a Resurrection—the thought and lore of Greece and Rome, for so many centuries held in thraldom by Ecclesiastical Christianity, reasserting suddenly and unexpectedly that vital energy which animated the old world, proclaiming in unmistakable accents their inherent supremacy and their ancient freedom, their liberty of Thought and their liberty of Doubt.

At the same time, and with the distinction just pointed out remaining prominently before our minds, we must by no means forget that Skepticism in the view of the Author, and as an inspiring principle of the following work, implies the function of a natural energy or intellectual organ. Hence it has qualities and discharges offices which are necessarily akin in all periods and in all conditions. Especially its relations—critical and antagonistic—to dogma of every kind, must under every variety of condition and circumstance be very largely similar if not identical. It is therefore of primary importance that the meaning and sphere of Skepticism should be marked out with as great clearness as possible. For this purpose the author is persuaded he cannot do better than lay before his readers a few observations partly apologetic, partly expository, extracted from the preface of his former work. Besides throwing light on the subject and treatment of the present work, it may help to set at rest a misconception—against which the author has been struggling for years—which has long affected and perverted current notions of Skepticism both in Philosophy and Theology.

Firstly.—The author deems it necessary to advise his readers that he has adopted the orthography of *Skeptic* and *Skepticism* partly for the sake of conforming to the increasing and true taste of spelling foreign words in their own manner, but chiefly for the purpose of bringing back, if possible, a much abused philosophical term to its primitive use. In these volumes Skepticism is assigned its original and classical meaning; in other words, it denotes simply the exercise of the questioning and suspensive faculty; and the Skeptic is above all things the Inquirer, the indomitable, never-tiring Searcher after Truth—the restless energetic thinker for whom search may be a neccesity even more imperious than the definitive attainment of the object sought. It follows that Skepticism is confined to no period, race, or religious or secular belief. The energy itself being altogether irrepressible and natural, its manifestation is no more blameworthy than other instincts and energies of human speculation, which also share a natural basis and starting point. It may also be further allowed in reference to its varied objects, that the forms assumed by Skepticism may be indefinitely numerous; and unless the members of the great body of thinkers and inquirers can be classified, nothing but confusion and indistinctness of thought can well be the result. Many writers have indeed remarked the confused appearance presented by ordinary *Histories of Philosophy*; in which thinkers of all kinds are huddled together without any regard to intellectual affinities or similarities. At least it seems worth considering whether some elementary basis of classification might not be adopted which would subdivide philosophers according to their psychological idiosyncrasies and tendencies. Thus *e.g.* they might be arranged, as DIOGENES LAERTIUS suggested, into two main classes, Synthetic and Analytic; or, using the more usual terms, Dogmatists and Skeptics—denoting respectively those in which constructive or disintegrating instincts preponderate. Such a division, although not rigidly logical, seems the best of

which the subject is capable. Hence the present work, taking as its subject eminent examples of the analysing, inquiring type of intellect, endeavours to show the similarity of its methods and procedures under varying conditions of time, race, country, diversity of dogmatic and social environment, etc. For the purposes of such an inquiry it is necessary to remember that Skepticism may be regarded from two standpoints.

1. In relation to dogma, it is the antithetical habit which suggests investigation—the instinct that spontaneously distrusts both finality and infallibility as ordinary attributes of Truth. It inculcates caution and wariness as against the confidence, presumption, self-complacent assurance of Dogmatists. In this respect a history of doubters is in fact the history of human enlightenment. Every advance in thought or knowledge has owed its impulse and inception to inquiring doubt. Hence it would be idle to deny or attempt to minimise the historical importance of Skepticism, or to ignore the perennial antagonism between doubt and dogma—the dynamic and static principles of all human knowledge.

2. Considered in itself, Skepticism implies (1) Continuous inquiry; (2) Suspense, or so much of it as is needful to impel men to search, as well as to impart the freedom which pertains to the exercise of all intellectual energy. This is, as already remarked, the literal meaning of the word, as well as its general signification in Greek philosophy. The Skeptic is therefore *not* the denier or dogmatic Negationist he is commonly held to be. Positive denial is as much opposed to the true Skeptical standpoint as determinate affirmation. One as well as the other implies fixity and finality. Each, when extreme and unconditional, makes a virtual claim to omniscience.

The true Skeptic may hence be defined as the seeker after ultimate Truth, or, in other words, the Absolute. He is the searcher who must needs find, if he succeed in his quest, not

only demonstrable and infallible, but unconditionally perfect and all inclusive Truth. This definition of Skepticism may serve to remove some of the objections made against it as an antagonistic influence to religion, and especially to the Christian Revelation. Taking, however, Christianity in its primary and true sense, as we find it *embodied in the words and life of Christ*, this supposed conflict of its dictates with reasonable inquiry after truth is nothing else than an ecclesiastical fiction. Certainly the claims of a Religion which asserts itself as THE TRUTH, which bases freedom upon truth-discovery, whose Founder's profession was that He came to bear witness to the truth, and which appealed to the Reason and Conscience of mankind, *i.e.* to their instincts of spiritual and moral truth, could never be fairly represented as opposed to truth-search. To the further objection that the definition of Christianity as Revelation renders further search needless, an answer is given in the course of this work. Here it may be remarked that, as a matter of fact, hardly one of the thinkers commonly accounted Skeptics, notwithstanding their aptitudes for free inquiry and their impatience of dogma, have ever thought of impugning the essentials of Christianity, in other words, the two great commandments of the law proclaimed by CHRIST as the basis of His religion. What has been most affected by Skeptical disintegration has not been Christianity so much as its undue ecclesiastical development.

As regards the method and plan of the work—the intermingling of philosophical discussion with formal essays—it may be enough to say that it seems especially demanded by the subject. A series of didactic essays, however useful for dogmatic purposes, would ill accord with the freedom which necessarily pertains to philosophical inquiry. Another advantage not less marked is the formal recognition of divergent standpoints in the contemplation of Truth. Without this, indeed, Free-thought and free discussion are mere contradictions in terms, while a third reason of a different kind seems

to be the expediency of investing philosophical subjects, whenever possible, with a humane, homely, and familiar interest. Writers on philosophy are too apt, as a rule, to affect the position of hierophants: they pose as careful watchers over sacred and incommunicable mysteries: they account themselves teachers of esoteric lore, and in harmony with their high vocation, their language is oftentimes pedantic and unduly technical. But whatever might have been urged in defence of such exclusiveness some centuries ago, it is certainly indefensible in these days of general culture. There are few problems that have emerged in the history of human speculation which might not profitably be discussed by well-informed and candid disputants, and few minds, not hopelessly stunted by excessive dogma, that might not benefit by such earnest and friendly colloquy. All such discussions must tend to engender intellectual independence, to awaken and stimulate thought, as well as to promote its truthful and ingenuous expression. This indeed represents one chief object of this work—its didactic as distinct from its historical aim. Writing the history of truthseekers, the Author incidentally advocates untiring and disinterested search for Truth as the duty alike of the Scientist, the Philosopher, and the Christian. Hence he adopts as the text of his subject the remarkable saying of LOCKE, that *to love Truth for Truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.*

From the foregoing remarks every reader of intelligence will have gathered that the Author of these volumes has a deliberate, long-excogitated, and very earnest purpose in view. In other words he regards Skepticism, with all allied forms of Philosophical Thought and Method, as *e.g.* Eclecticism, as likely to claim a far greater sphere of energy in the Future than it has in the Past, and this too in the domain not of Theology only, but of Philosophy and Science as well. For this reason he regards this work as possessing—with whatever

other qualities it may claim—the extremely useful merit of opportuneness. It responds, indirectly, but not the less completely, to various indications and signs and forecasts which appear to announce a free and Skeptical awakening and re-energizing of human speculation in the near future.

I. In Theology the Skeptical method falls in and harmonizes with the true conception of Faith—especially as laid down by the earliest teachers of Christianity—which subsequent Ecclesiastical Dogmatism, for its own selfish purposes, has sought to pervert or obscure. It not only allows but postulates a defect of demonstrable knowledge as an inevitable condition of man's limited faculties—an inseparable condition of his earthly lot. It supplements this partial attainment of man's intellectual and ratiocinative powers by an appeal to instincts, feelings, prepossessions and aspirations, which, though lacking in assured conviction, can never as long as man, variously endowed and cultured, retains the use of his nobler faculties, be without a certain indirect, moral and spiritual coercion. It comes to the aid of his inadequate reasoning by supplementing it with various kinds and degrees of Probability—approximations to or justifiable deviations from supposedly demonstrable Truth. Not only does it accept in all needed cases the due amount of philosophical and judicial equilibrium pertaining to each; but it demands that freedom of outlook and speculative research which is the inalienable prerogative of Thought, and which is both allied with and presupposes that entire absence of bias or preconception implied by Suspense. This, in the true analysis of religious and spiritual insight, is but another way of saying that so far from destroying, Skeptical thought gives new birth and energy to the religious faculty. It lays stress on, seizes and brings to the forefront, gives due room for the play and expansion of what is most valuable in our religious life. It calls into being, emphasizes and intensifies that fiducial relation of man to God which is the starting point and animating principle of all religious life. On the other

hand it destroys the germs of that conceit, narrowness, surcharged individuality and Dogmatic exclusiveness, which of all evils incident to Religion, is undoubtedly the greatest.

Happily, no symptom of our modern religious culture is more marked in the present day than the growing decrease—among all thoughtful and spiritually minded men—of Dogmatism in speculative Theology. Nor are the effects of this decrease in inducing caution, exactness in the estimate and statement of Religious Truths, liberality in the criticism and judgment of alien views, etc., less notable. Probably as the years move on, each charged, as by annual increment, with the wisdom and enlightenment of the Past, Skepticism and Freethought may once more be permitted—what has been so long wholly denied or grudgingly allowed them—their legitimate use not as foes and subverters, but as conditions and contributory causes of Religious Belief.

II. To Philosophy also the condition of Skeptical analysis and suspense give the needed starting point, the sustaining energy, the intellectual justification. At present, the two chief directions of Philosophical movement and research are (i.) on the metaphysical side—the latest developments of Hegelianism (ii.) on the Physical side, the various ramifications of Darwinism. Both of these developments seem to have passed the Dogmatic stages, which are as inevitable to schools and systems of Thought, as certain diseases of infancy are to growing children. Except in a few cases and directions, and those steadily diminishing, the bounds of Dogmatic Truth are continually becoming more restricted. The Hegelian metaphysician—mindful of the history of that Dogmatic Faith since it was first promulgated by the Master—will not bind himself to the tenet that no other correlation of Thought and Being than that he formulated is possible or conceivable. The Darwinian—mindful of certain potent reactions and retractations—will not dare to pronounce on the number of originating Types from whence all the terrestrial varieties of Life are de-

scended; nor, if he be wise, will he venture to affirm that the scientific knowledge at his command suffices to give an adequate account of the commencement in time of a single one of the countless types of existence with which creation teems. The reasonings and theorizings both of one and the other are now largely hypothetical. Both the Metaphysician and the wise Physicist agree to disclaim the Omniscience which could alone warrant the Dogmatic assumptions and unverified conclusions of their respective Sciences in days gone by. Here again Skepticism attests its worth as the attendant on Philosophic and Scientific Truth. It teaches the student both of the phenomena that lie within his grasp, and of the unknown and unfathomed ocean of Phenomena and Noumena that encircle his individual existence, and therefrom stretch forth into Immensities in every direction, that caution, humility, self-restraint, and suspense are primary qualifications for Truth Search and Truth Discovery.

A final word as to the scope of the following work:

The Author cannot lay claim to the merit of so selecting his representatives of Skepticism and Free-thought that most forms and directions of those energies find in them their impersonations and illustrations. He has merely taken the thinkers as they came in a kind of rough chronological order, but having thus conformed to what seemed the historical exigencies of the case, it is to him a source of gratification that the thinkers so selected do in reality represent so great a variety of the processes of Free-thought and Skepticism as could fairly be expected in the men chosen, and in the times and circumstances which they illustrate. In short, they are mostly typical thinkers, who will always find, as long as humanity with its thought and knowledge-greed endures, mental scions and successors among cultured and thoughtful men.

The Author, who did his share of proof corrections and reference verifications during a memorable period of physical

debility and prostration, has several friends to thank for much sympathy and varied assistance. These, however, he is not permitted to mention, or to express openly and frankly as he fain would, his most grateful acknowledgments. To the publishers he feels himself indebted for unvarying kindness and courtesy. Indeed he must ask for special permission to record his thankful appreciation of the invaluable counsel and practical help of Mr. Wm. Swan Sonnenschein in compiling the excellent and elaborate Index, which enriches the book and immeasurably enhances its usefulness to the student. That the Author of the masterly volume, THE BEST BOOKS, which may claim to be at once the most useful and most excellent Bibliography of its kind in the English language, should have put aside important literary work, in order to compile a full Index to these volumes, is an honour which their author cannot sufficiently appreciate, and which beggars every emotion of ordinary thankfulness.

JOHN OWEN.

EAST ANSTEY RECTORY,
January 6th, 1893.

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THE SKEPTICS OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.

VOL. I.

'*Die Erde ist der grosse Felsen, woran die Menschheit, der eigentliche Prometheus, gefesselt ist, und vom Geier des Zweifels zerfleischt wird; sie hat das Licht gestohlen, und leidet nun Martern dafür.*'

Heine, *Religion u. Philosophie* (*Werke*: vol. xiii.), p. 307.

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Pascal, *Pensées*, Ed. Faugere, vol. ii. p. 347.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL CAUSES.

TREVOR. The Skepticism of the Italian Renaissance—our present subject—necessitates a treatment like that we bestowed on its kindred manifestation in Ancient Greece. I purpose therefore acquiring a general idea of it by passing in brief review the foremost types of the intellectual freedom it produced before we consider its overt philosophical Skepticism in the person of Pomponazzi.[1]

MISS LEYCESTER. Please tell us your selected types of Italian Free-thought.

TREVOR. There is as you know rather an embarrassment of riches in the subject—a difficulty in discerning the wood on account of the trees. After some hesitation I chose Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Pulci, Macchiavelli and Guicciardini as

[1] On the subject of Pomponazzi the authorities quoted are:—*De immortalitate Animæ*, 12mo. 1534 (which, however, according to Brunet is a false date).

1. Petri Pomponatii, *Philosophi et Theologi doctrina et ingenio præstantissimi opera.* Basiliæ 1567.

2. Luigi Ferri, *La Psicologia di Pietro Pomponazzi* (*Reale Accademia dei Lincei*). Roma 1877.

3. Pietro Pomponazzi, *Studi storici zu la scuola Bolognese e Padovana del secolo xvi.*, per Francesco Fiorentino. Firenze 1868.

3*a*. Review of the foregoing work in M. Franck's *Moralistes et Philosophes*, pp. 85-136. Paris 1872.

4. E. Renan, *Averroes et L'Averroism.* Paris 1867.

5. Niceron, *Memoires*, vol. xxv. pp. 329–350.

6. Pauli Jovii, *Elogia Doctorum Virorum.*

7. Tiraboschi, *Storia*, etc., also Ginguiné's *Histoire de la Litterature d'Italie.*

Of the Historians the best account of Pomponazzi is to be found in Brücker, vol. iv., Ritter, vol. ix. and Buhle (Translation by Jourdain), vol. ii.

See also Bayle's *Dictionary*, art. *Pomponace*, and Bartholmess; article in the *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques.*

On the general subject of the Renaissance the authors employed may be found in the foot-notes.

fair representatives of all the most salient of its many-sided aspects.

HARRINGTON. A judicious selection I think on the whole; though if the subject had fallen to my share I should have tried to include Ariosto, Cardinal Bembo and possibly Æneas Sylvius.

ARUNDEL. Not I presume in addition to Trevor's half-dozen. As it is we have surely more than enough regarding them as preliminary to the consideration of an obscure thinker like Pomponazzi. From an artistic point of view we might demur to the erection of such noble vestibules to a rather insignificant temple.

TREVOR. You misapprehend my object Arundel. It is not merely as introductory to Pomponazzi that I purpose dwelling briefly on these leaders of Italian Free-thought. The names I have mentioned are of course abundantly able to stand each one by himself. But our subject has a dual aspect. i. We are in presence of a large diversified composite movement of Free-thought, of which we must get a general idea. ii. We require a specimen of its most developed Skepticism, which we have in Pomponazzi.

ARUNDEL. The plan of assessing a Thought-Epoch by examining its chief names is, I am aware, not uncommon, but I confess it is not to my mind altogether satisfactory. I have heard it called a 'grapes of Eschol argument'—judging a country by its abnormal products. It is not unlike the old method of writing history by chronicling the births and deaths of kings and the battles of great generals, and leaving the every-day life, and ordinary thought of the people quite out of consideration. The method is not calculated to give true average results. If one were asked the ordinary stature of the people of London it would hardly be fair to confine one's measurements to the guards, or any other picked body of tall men.

TREVOR. Perhaps not, but in history which is dependant on the records of the, often distant, past, we must use the materials we have, not the non-existent ones we could have desiderated; and for obvious if unfortunate reasons the outline

of kings, generals, prominent politicians are clearer and more easily seized upon than that of minor mortals. The same rule holds in the Literature of the past, in which only the prominent lights leave behind them works of permanent worth by which their intellectual stature can be estimated. But the conclusions derivable from examining the taller specimens of humanity are by no means devoid of significance for those of ordinary growth. For given the height of the tallest and we can compute approximately the stature of the next in growth. Moreover the foremost minds in any period of general mental excitation and upheaval are only the vanguard of the army following in their steps.

HARRINGTON. You are quite right in urging the necessity of this mode of computing the average intellectual state of any given epoch. We must adopt some method analogous to a trigonometrical survey—climb the highest hills and take sights from one to the other.

MISS LEYCESTER. That may do in measuring countries, but we want to measure common people, their thoughts, feelings and opinions. I see no other way than judging as nearly as possible of normal measurements from those that are extreme. Our problem is, given a Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, to find the intellectual condition of ordinary Italians in the thirteenth and two following centuries.

MRS. HARRINGTON. There is, I think, another element in the calculation that brings the literary giants in closer contact with the multitude, and that is, the former not only take instinctively their position in front of the crowd, but the crowd recognizes them as leaders and accepts their guidance, which it would not do if it did not share their thoughts, sympathies and aspirations. The Italians who recited with enjoyment Dante's Commœdia, or Petrarca's Rime, or laughed over Boccaccio's Decameron, were certainly men of a kindred even if vastly inferior intellectual stature.

TREVOR. Very true, and for gaining that approximation to the general level of Italian thought, which I acknowledge is all we can hope to achieve, the names I have selected seem to me especially well adapted on account of their popularity. As

to our typical example of Skepticism, Pomponazzi, whom Arundel appears inclined to under-estimate, is really a very remarkable man, whose importance in the history of Italian literature and European thought, his fellow-countrymen are only just beginning to realize. He is in fact the leading philosopher, in the strict sense of the term, of the Italian Renaissance, and occupies in the intellectual history of Italy the same position as Descartes in that of France, or Bacon in that of England, though without sharing their influence.

Miss Leycester. But I do not see why you claim for him the position of being the earliest Italian skeptic, for religious unbelief is a well marked feature of Italian Literature at least a century before the time of Pomponazzi.

Trevor. No doubt. You have a considerable amount of Free-thought and aspiration from the beginning of the thirteenth century. In fact it is almost coæval with the birth of the national literature, which we cannot place higher than the twelfth century. . . . What I mean by assigning to Pomponazzi the first place in the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance is that he is the founder of a new method. He is the first to break off, on the ground of logic rather than feeling, from scholasticism and mediæval theology—to refuse allegiance to the traditional standards of preceding centuries, to insist upon the indefeasible right of the human reason to enquire and determine for itself what is true in philosophy and religion.

Harrington. Especially, as it would seem, the former. But if we are to assign to Pomponazzi the first place in the freer intellectual movement in Italy he becomes the leading thinker of the same movement regarded as European. For Italy caught the first rays of the new light long before Germany or England.

Miss Leycester. I see that Professor Fiorentino in his work on Pomponazzi, claims the Italian movement of Humanism and Free-thought as superior to the religious revivalism of the German Reformation. He says that if Italy did not follow the Lutheran movement it was because she had already surpassed it.[1]

[1] *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 153. 'La nostra Rinascenza adunque entra innanzi

ARUNDEL. I should strongly demur to that opinion. The religious reality of Luther, even if sometimes tainted with fanaticism, was immeasurably better than the licensed hypocrisy which was the usual form that emancipation from spiritual tyranny took in Italy.

HARRINGTON. Considered purely as a question of freedom and leaving out of sight its ethical aspects, the Italian humanists seem to me to have the advantage. Both were slaves who had asserted their freedom, of whom one continued to bear, though in an easy form and so as not to impede the free movement of his limbs, the badges of his former servitude; while the other, having divested himself of his bonds, proceeded immediately to forge chains of another description, though perhaps of a less cramping and galling nature. When I was in Italy last summer, I enjoyed frequent opportunities of conversing on this very subject with a learned and thoughtful Italian, who shared the opinion of Professor Fiorentino. On my putting to him the question, 'How much do you think Italy has lost in the way of political and religious freedom by not following in the steps of the German Reformation?' 'Lost! Signor!' was his answer; 'I do not think we have lost anything. Germany only created another pope and another source of infallibility. We acted more in conformity with the dictates of human, or at least, Italian nature. For to nine people out of ten an infallible pope of some sort is an imperative necessity, and *cæteris paribus* an old one is better than a new. We therefore kept our pope, but gradually deprived him of all power of doing mischief. Even if Lutheranism had suited the more fervid and imaginative temperament of our southern race, it would have retarded our literary and philosophical progress for some centuries. Indeed it produced this very effect in Germany itself, which cannot be said to possess an original thinker, until Lutheranism had expended its force, and entered upon a course of disintegration, *i.e.* until the birth of Kant.[1] The enlightenment which

per ardimento, per novità, der ragionevolezza alla Riforma Tedesca; e se noi non seguimmo il movimento luterano, fu perchè l'avevamo sorpassato.'

[1] It is only fair to remark that other causes have been assigned for the late birth and tardy development of Philosophy in Germany compared with France

followed in the wake of the Königsberg Philosopher is the parallel in Germany to the great literary movement through which Italy passed three centuries before; and Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio are our national representatives of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller. As one beneficial result of our moderate and cautious policy, Italy escaped the religious wars which desolated France and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most of her own disturbances proceeding from foreign interference, and even when native, rarely turning upon purely religious questions. At present, I regard my country as standing on a level with Germany both as to civil and religious liberty; and her course, besides being the only conceivable one in her peculiar circumstances, has been less devious, and on the whole less marked by internal disturbance than that of her great Teutonic neighbour.' Making due allowance for patriotic feelings, I think there may be some truth in my friend's argument.

Miss Leycester. Most Germans, I am aware, make the precise point at which the active but spent energies of Lutheranism begin to pass into the new movement of the 'Enlightenment' to be the publication of Kant's Critic, but I should rather go back to Lessing, in whose oft-quoted words, 'Luther, Du hast uns von dem Joch der Tradition erlöst; wer erlöst uns von dem unerträglicheren Joch des Buchstabens?' you have at once a starting-point, a motto, and a prognosis of the second German Reformation.

Trevor. The pertinacity of Italians in preserving forms and symbols when they have become emptied of all genuine meaning is very striking. Its latest illustration you have in the streets of Rome in the present day. Probably the notion of the temporal sovereignty of the pope (the abortive dogma of Pio Nono) is as dead in the minds of enlightened Catholics, as the Papal decree which forbad Galileo to

and Italy. Leibnitz, *e.g.* ascribed it to the fact of the German language differing so completely from the Latin; whereas the speculations of the Schoolmen found an easy transition into the thought and culture of France and Italy, by means of the affinity of their languages to Latin. See Feuerbach Sämmt. Werke V. p. 193. The same cause might seem to explain the similar tardiness in the case of England.

teach the motion of the earth. Yet the symbols of Papal rule are as conspicuous in Rome now as they ever were. I own I was much struck with this contrast on my only visit to Rome since the events of 1859–61. The outward aspect of the eternal city was scarcely altered. True, I found the crowds of priests and monks of old Rome replaced by Government officials, and its municipal affairs were better administered than in the old times. But the Papal arms were still suspended on the portals of the Quirinal, while nothing but a piece of tricolour bunting indicated the momentous fact that the palace of the Pontifical Consulta was now become the National Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the state apartments of Victor Emmanuel's residence, I found the same pious inscriptions, the same ascetic pictures had been scrupulously left in their places. In the great halls of the Capitol open for municipal balls, the incongruity I was told reached its climax, for the fashionable world of Rome during the season dance before colossal statues of old Farnese or Barberini popes and in sight of frescoes representing the martyrdom of saints, and other legends of Catholicism. . . . Had the French been in the place of the Roman citizens during the Revolution, they would have made short work of the sacred symbols of the tiara, cross keys, and all other mementos of the older *régime.* . . . After all the resolution of a people not to break too abruptly with the past—who know how to preserve symbolical forms while altering and amending their signification—who can in politics as in other matters discriminate between letter and spirit—is no small proof of their capacity for freedom.

ARUNDEL. I have seen similar views as to the superiority of the Italian Renaissance to the German Reformation put forward, but I believe them to be founded on a partial and hasty generalization. *Prima facie*, there is no doubt a resemblance between the intellectual libertinism of Italy in the 15th century, and the rationalism and anti-dogmatism of Germany since the time of Kant. But the resemblance seems to me superficial. The difference is that which exists between the insipidity of fruit hurriedly and artificially ripened, and the full mellow flavour of that which has enjoyed its normal proportion

of time as well as of heat, of retarding as well as stimulating influences. The Italian Free-thought of the 15th century is a mere *tour de force*, the hasty and temporary effect of accidental causes. German 'Enlightenment' on the other hand is the tardy but natural product of a large number of special influences, not the least important of them being, the wholesome mental restraint, the solidity of intellectual formation, as well as the sturdy independence of thought and character, which the Lutheran Reformation initiated. Even the bibliolatry which formed a necessary characteristic of the movement, appears to me better qualified to forward healthy mental growth, than a submission—though mainly specious and pretended—to ecclesiastical domination. For bibliolatry, we must remember, has engendered Biblical criticism, just as astrology brought forth astronomy. And the continual investigation and criticism of a book like the Bible with its diversity of character and contents, is a better educational instrument, regarding it only from that point of view, than the *ipse dixits* of a succession of priests, few of whom transcend intellectual mediocrity. As it is Protestantism has exercised both a purifying and strengthening influence on the mental development of her foremost sons. Shakspeare and Goethe as pure products of Roman Catholicism are to me inconceivable.

TREVOR. Your deduction, Arundel, seems to me hazardous. Genius considered in itself, is for the most part independent of religious influence of any kind. You might *e.g.* read the greater part of Shakspeare or Goethe without knowing or being able to ascertain, whether they were Catholics or Protestants, and with Cervantes, Calderon and Molière as the undoubted offspring of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism has not I conceive any well-grounded claim of superiority, at least to the overwhelming extent sometimes claimed for it. Of course, indirectly and operating through a long succession of generations, a religious creed must have its effect on the intellect of any race or nation, and of any individual belonging to either, and theoretically, an enlightened Protestantism, as a creed based upon mental independence and religious freedom ought to achieve nobler types of intellectual excellence than

Romanism, though whether it has done so in any particular instance will depend largely on the nature of the intellectual quality in question, and must in any case be exceedingly difficult to prove. At present however our concern is not with the products of modern Protestantism, but with an accidental growth, 'a spirit' we may term it of the Catholicism of the fifteenth century.

HARRINGTON. Another factor in the problem would be the distinction between different kinds of culture. Philosophy, criticism and erudition grow fastest where the divergence and interchange of thought are greatest, and therefore are really aided by political and religious agitation, when these are not excessive. On the other hand, those branches of literature in which 'the form' is of primary importance, require for their mature development long periods of peace and prosperity. The drama *e.g.* as the artistic exponent of human life and character seems to have thriven best in communities that have been least disturbed by political or religious commotions. Shakspeare and Calderon are perhaps the highest products of European dramatic art, and they belong to countries which have suffered less than any others in Europe from intestine disturbances—I mean Spain and England. Similarly the best products of the Greek drama had attained maturity before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war—the first conflict that really shook Greek society to its base.

ARUNDEL. Returning to Pomponazzi, to whom I think we should confine our present remarks as being the least known name among those brought before us by the Renaissance, my only accessible authorities on him have been Brücker and Bayle. . . . I am surprised to find that a thinker whose methods and researches were in reality so hostile to Christianity should have been so little persecuted. I presume we must regard such immunity as a proof of the general relaxation of dogmatic faith and teaching during the pontificate of Leo X. I wonder whether there is any truth in the story that this Pope sent for Pomponazzi to Rome to hear him debate with his adversary Niphus on the immortality of the soul. Bayle tells the story and it is repeated by Renan.[1]

[1] *Averroes*, p. 363.

TREVOR. Both Bayle and Renan have been misled on the point by a phrase in the letters of Gui Patin, whose reference to the subject I will read to you (taking down a volume from his shelves): 'Que le Pape Léon X fit venir a Rome P. Pomponace pour le faire disputer de l'immortalité de l'âme contre Augustinus Niphus; qu'il se donnoit du plaisir, de cette dispute mutuelle, et neanmoins' continues the sarcastic writer, 'que tous trois n'y croyoient point non plus que la plupart n'y croient pas aujourd'hui à Rome.'[1] But Patin though an amusing writer is not a good historical authority, besides which he wrote some forty years after the supposed event. Professor Fiorentino thinks the invitation to Niphus came from a Bishop Fiandino, though possibly at the suggestion of the Pope. Not that I think Leo X. or most of his sacred conclave would have been greatly scandalized at hearing the mortality of the soul conclusively demonstrated, especially on such an authority as Aristotle, for those were days in which, to quote a contemporary writer, some distinct departure from orthodox belief was deemed the proper mark of a courtier and a gentleman.[2]

MISS LEYCESTER. You must not think, Mr. Arundel, that Pomponazzi escaped persecution, even of a very violent kind, because he did not suffer martyrdom. His biographer states that he was actually harassed to death by his pitiless enemies the monks.[3] Rome has more weapons than one in her armoury, and her bloodless ones have often proved the most cruel.

HARRINGTON. Pomponazzi must nevertheless be accounted fortunate. Though he did not flourish in the noontide of the Italian Renaissance, he lived in what we may term its early afternoon hours. When we come to Giordano Bruno at the

[1] *Lettres*, vol. ii. p. 318. Cf. Fiorentino, pp. 41, 42.

[2] See quotation from Caracciolo's MS. Life of Paul IV. in Ranke's *History of the Popes*, Eng. Trans. i. p. 56. 'In quel tempo non pareva fosse galantuomo e buon cortegiano colui che de' dogmi della chiesa non aveva qualche opinion erronea et heretica.' As to the prevalent unbelief in Immortality, comp. Vanini *Amphitheatrum*, etc., Exercit.' xxvi. pp. 151–152. So Ariosto on the same subject, speaks of some 'who believed in nothing above their roof,' 'non credar sopra il tetto.' Sonnetta xxxiv.

[3] 'Quel filosofo, che il clero aveva perseguitato a morte.'—*Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 68.

close of the fifteenth century, we shall find the condition of things completely changed. The shades of mediæval darkness and bigotry are again beginning to gather, and Free-thought is punished by torture and death.

TREVOR. Well, we need not anticipate the close of the day before we have basked in its sunshine, and enjoyed the brightness and promise of its morning hours. This is at present our pleasing duty: I proceed therefore to my paper, commencing with a slight sketch of Italian Free-thought as it is indicated by other writers, both previous to and contemporary with Pomponazzi:—

* * * * *

Were we to sum up in a single word the literary and philosophical proclivities of Italy in the fourteenth and following centuries, we could hardly select a better than the word Paganism. In the chief centre of Christianity, around its very citadel, so to speak, the ideas and feelings of men had suddenly undergone a portentous change. It seemed as if the disembodied spirit of the old classical world had again risen from the tomb, and invigorated by the repose and oblivion of centuries, was preparing to renew its life and death struggle with Christianity. The complaint of Juvenal:—

'. . . In Tiberim defluxit Orontes,'

might in words have been repeated, though their intention and signification would have now required inversion, because it was the Tiber itself, and not its eastern tributaries that was on this occasion the source of pollution. The change was at least complete for the time. The authorities and records of Christianity were compelled to give place to classical writers. Instead of Augustine and Jerome, popes and cardinals employed themselves with Virgil and Horace, Ovid and Catullus. Homer attracts more attention than the newly discovered MSS. of the Greek Testament. Learned bishops refuse to read Jerome's Vulgate lest their own Ciceronian Latinity should be corrupted, and St. Paul's Epistles are deliberately put on one side by Cardinal Bembo on account of their unclassical Greek.[1] The Christian Church so far as her Italian rulers were concerned might be said to have suddenly discovered itself to be not Arian, but Heathen. That this prevailing taste for Pagan Freedom and culture should sometimes degenerate into a liking for Pagan Licence was only what

[1] Cardinal Bembo was the friend and patron of Pomponazzi, whom Pope Leo X. appointed his secretary on account of his Ciceronian Latinity.

might have been expected. Perhaps it was the marvellously rapid growth of Italian culture that, with other causes, engendered the social demoralization which was undoubtedly its accompaniment; for a too hurried development in culture, art, philosophy or religion is frequently as debilitating to communities as an over-hasty physical development is to individuals.

To attempt a detailed narrative of all the Free-thinking and Skeptical influences which prepared the way for, and serve to illustrate the labours of Pomponazzi would be to write a history of the Italian Renaissance. All that we can undertake is a rapid glance at some of the chief causes of the movement, followed by a few biographical illustrations of their operation in producing Free-thought.

The commencement of free speculation in Italy is *mutatis mutandis* not unlike the earliest development of philosophy in Greece. The free Communes of Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries re-enact the rôle which the Greek colonies—some of the more flourishing of them being on Italian soil—had filled so many years before. These Italian cities were municipalities self-created for the most part by the exigencies of commerce, the need of protection from ruling princes, and a desire for social intercourse as well as for civil and intellectual liberty. Mediævalism was in its very nature repugnant to the idea of a purely secular state and therefore to that of municipal government and communal privileges. The only Sovereign power possessing an inherent right to exist, and to which all others were in theory subordinate, was the Church,[1] in virtue of its assumed divine origin, and its permanent principles of government. But before the twelfth century the Italian cities had one by one emerged from the feudal thraldom which their Lombard conquerors had originally imposed upon them, and which had afterwards passed into the hands of the Church. Contemporaneously with this rise of Communes in the north and centre of Italy was the revival in the south of the long dormant idea of the Monarchy—the Holy Roman Empire—as a secular power entirely independent of the Church. The commencement of the general awakening of political life which gave birth to these two potent institutions, has been traced to the

[1] Some writers would add the Holy Roman Empire which claimed to rule Italy from A.D. 962. But the rapid succession of secular rulers between that date and 476 when Odovacar conquered Italy had for a time weakened the obligations of the Italian Communes and States to Secular Rule. Their independence and autonomous claims form their chief characteristics. The general recognition of the secular claim of the Holy Roman Empire cannot be placed earlier than the twelfth century.

large manumission of slaves by their terrified feudal lords in expectation of the end of the world which the Church announced to take place in the year 1000. These freedmen contributed greatly to the formation of a middle class in Italy as well as to the diffusion of the idea and sentiment of liberty among the unenfranchised classes. Instinctively grouping together in cities and resorting to civic occupations they soon formed an element of strength and independence which made itself felt against their feudal masters. The municipal freedom thus gained operated in various ways in the promotion of Free-thought. It furnished a republican standpoint from which both Pope and Emperor might be criticised and if need were, opposed. It presented as against ecclesiastical and hereditary sovereignties a new conception of human rights and liberty. It stimulated by the very exercise of self-government a spirit of freedom and independent judgment that radiated into other spheres of human thought and energy. The successful effort of the Lombard League against Frederic Barbarossa was the first distinct intimation that a new Political power had arisen in Italy which was capable of holding its own against the greatest feudal sovereignty of the time. It was easy to see that this power was capable of enormous development. The citizen, especially when the elected chief of his municipality, was destined to attain a social position, a regard and consideration which made him the equal of Emperor or Pope. It is no doubt somewhat marvellous that the Communes, having learnt the secret of their strength when united, should have made no attempt to establish a federation, and thus laid the foundation of National Unity, but there were potent reasons, partly in the character of the people, partly in the circumstances of the times which rendered such Political foresight and wisdom impossible. Nor can it be said that Italy lost much by the postponement, for the time being, of its national existence. It was only reasonable that men not long liberated from feudal serfdom and the benumbing influence of feudal ideas, should become accustomed to freedom, and should acquire the art of self-government, and social discipline, on a small scale, before they attempted to coalesce their different interests and opinions into a single nationality.[1] In all probability the political education of the Italian Communes, and their aptitude for genuine freedom, were fostered by the self-same causes that produced their mutual antagonism and disintegration. For the rivalries existing among themselves and between the various leagues and organizations

[1] Comp. Hallam, *Middle Ages*, i. 359: 'Ancient prejudices therefore precluded a federate league of independent principalities and republics for which perhaps the actual condition of Italy unfitted her.'

associated with them gave an impetus to thought, emulation, discussion and inquiry which no other agency could have effected.[1]

The Papacy was not at first hostile to the Communes, the government of some of them continued to be administered by Pontifical legates, while all of them acknowledged the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope. Indeed Hadrian IV. and Gregory VII. adopted the policy of cherishing them as a newly developed secular power which they might employ against the Monarchy. They did not foresee that the democratic spirit, the civic independence and self-assertion, the capacity for self-government, the administrative powers acquired in secular matters might without much difficulty be transferred to sacred affairs. All political education based on free institutions has sooner or later proved hostile to sacerdotal despotism, and the successors of Hildebrand discovered that the Communes were by no means always pliant and obedient vassals of the Papacy.

Equally inimical were the free municipalities of Italy to the Empire. The principle of self-government and civil freedom—their sole *raison d'être*—was a standing protest against the feudal supremacy claimed by the Roman Empire. This position was not in reality affected by the fact that some of the Communes were for a time so many fiefs of the Empire, or that their chief magistrates were nominees of the Emperor. The principle of self-rule—the training imparted by the management of their own affairs—the self-reliant judgment naturally engendered by political discussion were in themselves incentives to freedom, and quite antagonistic to the servile recognition of any external despotism.

The advantage of an emancipation equally free from the pre-potent influence whether of Pope or Kaiser became manifested in the thirteenth century by the struggles of Guelf and Ghibelline, and the discovery that those cities which had adopted the anti-feudal principles of the Guelfs were more conspicuous for their prosperity than those which still submitted to the suzerainty of the Empire.[2] Their independence was more secure—their commerce was greater and less impeded by fiscal restrictions—their forms of government more elastic and adjustable to new circumstances—their polity more vigorous and self sustaining. The greatest example of the height of fame and prosperity to which a well-conducted commerce was capable of rising is Florence. At the culmination of its power this greatest of the Tuscan free-cities rivalled in wealth and importance the old established hereditary sovereignties of Europe. It possessed

[1] Comp. Bettinelli, *Risorgimento d' Italia*, cap. 3.

[2] Comp. Settembrini, *Lezioni di Lett. Italiana*, vol. i. p. 50.

a large and well equipped standing army. Its chief magistrate was received as the social equal of kings. Foreign nations coveted its alliance. Its opulent merchants had their banks and houses of business throughout Italy, in the Levant, in France, Germany, England and Spain. Its free Institutions gave an impulse to commerce, and commercial prosperity imparted a new value and enhancement to liberty. Allowing for the somewhat exceptional character of Florentine prosperity, the advance of minor Communes, such as Milan, Genoa and Pisa, in the same road of wealth and commerce in exact proportion *exceptis excipiendis* as their institutions were founded on liberty and a respect for popular rights, is a sufficient proof of the connection and mutual excitation that existed between the Free cities of Italy and the Free-thought of the Renaissance.

Contemporaneously with the rise of the Communes and the reconsolidation of the Monarchy, the Papacy had reached the culminating point of its dogmatic development, and its tyrannical sway over the human conscience. The ambitious mind and powerful imagination of Hildebrand had conceived the idea of the absolute supremacy of the throne of St. Peter over all terrestrial and secular powers, without exception. In reality such a claim rested upon the same foundation as that which Papal hierarchs had so long arrogated of prescribing all the beliefs and authenticating all the knowledge and inquiry of Christendom. Once grant that a power deriving its existence and authority from Heaven is appointed to decree from an *a priori* standpoint all human convictions, and to regulate every department of human conduct, and the attempted subjugation of all human faculties and sources of authority becomes the only logical deduction of such a claim. If the Papacy with its power of the Keys really dominates over the eternal world—if the intelligences and powers of heaven are reduced to a kind of Papal executive, and God Himself is but the obedient vassal and executioner of the Pope's behests and fulminations—*a fortiori* must the same power have a right to control all earthly potentates, of whatever kind and degree. Was a Hohenstaufen Prince, Hildebrand imperiously demanded, to be regarded as superior to the High Majesty of the Eternal? Was a mere earthly sovereign to dispute, or even to criticise, decrees and statutes which Omnipotence itself[1]—such was the extraordinary theory—had no choice but to approve and ratify? or were the merely temporary affairs and interests with which alone earthly monarchs are concerned to be esteemed of greater import than the things of eternity? In remembering the enormous mischiefs Papal pretensions

[1] Comp. Vogt, *Hildebrand als Papst. Greg. VII.*, p. 7.

have caused in European history, we do not sufficiently reflect that the most outrageous of them is only the logical issue of a few elementary principles equally common to every system of sacerdotalism. Rome; in the persons of Innocent III., Gregory VII. and Boniface VIII. only differs from other centres of priestly domination, by being more unscrupulously logical, and by carrying its primary maxims to their legitimate conclusion, though it be a clear *reductio ad absurdum*.[1] From the standpoint of sacerdotalism the plea of Hildebrand when about to excommunicate Henry, is unanswerable: 'When Christ trusted his flock to St. Peter, saying "Feed my sheep," did he except kings? or when he gave him the power to bind and loose, did he withdraw any one from his jurisdiction?' If the hierarchs of Papal and other churches no longer put forward, at least so arrogantly, their extravagant pretensions, it is not because they have ceased to hold them, but because, in an age of culture and enlightenment, they merely serve to excite the ridicule of thinking men. Hence we find—and it is not the least important of the several lessons that our subject is calculated to teach—that excessive dogma and sacerdotal tyranny are just as fatal to the peace and welfare of political institutions as of private individuals. Happily the institutions when powerful can take care of their interests, which the individual may not always be able to do. In the comparative darkness of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we must therefore regard it as a providential circumstance that the Italian Communes and the Monarchy were rising into power simultaneously with the development of the most extravagant pretensions of the Papacy, and that political rights, and communal and municipal privileges were in a position to vindicate to some extent the freedom of humanity, trodden under the iron heel of Ecclesiasticism.[2]

But this co-equal growth of the rival powers had indirectly a further consequence. It suggested partly a political and secular

[1] See the links in Hildebrand's chain of reasoning extracted from his Epistles and set in order by Vogt, *Hildebrand als Papst Gregorius VII.*, pp. 172–176. Comp. also Riezler's *Literarischen Widersacher der Papste*, p. 8, etc., and Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*, pp. 176–178. Hildebrand's comparison of the sacred and secular powers respectively to the sun and moon is well known. Comp. his *Epistles*, viii. 21.

[2] Of course no attempt is here made to determine the political position of the Communes. The amount of freedom which they accorded was doubtless imperfect and precarious. They are here regarded from an intellectual standpoint, and only in relation to Free-thought. They formed amid the social and political disorganization of the middle ages a nucleus round which gathered the newly awakened thoughts and aspirations of Italians, from which they radiated to every part of Italy, quickening all her manifold activities, national as well as intellectual.

antagonism to Ecclesiastical domination, and partly it furnished a neutral standpoint whence the claims both of one and the other could be scrutinized. Hence it happened that not a few, even of ecclesiastics, were content with a position of suspense between Pope and Kaiser, siding now with one now with the other just as their personal interests dictated, or else, from a feeling of indifference, holding aloof from both. It is easy to see that however unprincipled from an ethical point of view such a situation might possibly have been, it was not devoid of advantages in securing greater liberty for those who occupied it, while the mere fact of its existence did something to repress the overweening arrogance of the Papacy. But in spite of these impediments to its development and incentives to independent thought, it must be admitted that the Papacy obtained a victory over the Empire, though it was one of those hard fought victories which are not distinguishable from defeats. For a time Hildebrand's conception of the absolute sovereignty of the Church overpowered the old idea of the Divine Institution of the Monarchy. We have already seen, in the case of William of Ockam, the origin of the notion and the service it conferred as against the pretensions of the Papacy. Its resuscitation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, partly due to the controversies of the Popes with the Empire, must be ascribed almost equally to the strong influx of humanistic ideas. The theory was no longer based upon theological considerations and on the supposed realization of O. T. prophecy; it now came to possess a new foundation in the excitations and aspirations awakened by the classical revival. In the minds of Dante and Petrarca, for instance, the conception of the Empire as the legitimate successor of Imperial or Republican Rome imparted a stability to the Emperor's power not the less strong from being based on antiquarian and ideal grounds. We cannot indeed understand any portion of the political history of Mediæval Italy without having in mind its intimate connection with the history, institutions, nay even with the legends, of old Rome. The chief Italian cities had long claimed to be founded by the companions of Æneas on their voyage from Troy.[1] The language of Rome was still the accepted literary medium for Italian thinkers down to the time of Petrarca and Boccaccio. No small share of the consideration enjoyed by the Church in the estimation of the Humanists was due to its retention of the venerable tongue in which not only Augustine and Jerome, but Virgil, Cicero and Seneca wrote. The renewed study of the Civil Law in the twelfth century induced a closer acquaintance with,

[1] Comp. A. Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. p. 160.

and in proportion, a greater admiration for, the institutions and jurisprudence of ancient Rome.[1] The municipalities of Rome, Florence and other Italian cities were modelled on the civic government of Republican Rome. Their common-hall was styled the capitol. Their officers held the old names, and so far as practicable attempted to exercise the functions of their classical prototypes. The effect of these aspirations after political institutions so largely founded on true ideas of human liberty, in stimulating activity of thought and inducing a relish for similar privileges, was immense. No doubt the result of these classical reminiscences was not always to foster a belief in the 'Divine right' whether of Pope or Emperor. The ill-starred enterprises of Rienzi and Arnold of Brescia reveal another and more sinister aspect of ancient political studies. The citizens of the Italian Communes sometimes regarded with veneration the lives and actions of Brutus, Cato, the Scipios, and other vindicators of popular rights. Allowing for occasional excesses in individualism and in republican aspirations, such studies and predilections imparted a self-reliance, and a masculine tone of feeling, which would naturally find expression in other directions. The stern impugner of the secular power of the Monarchy might be led to question the authority of the Papacy, especially as both claimed to be founded on the same basis. Whatever the primary divinity that originated and hedged round the Church and the Empire, the action of neither power on the welfare and liberties of humanity was so indisputably sacred and beneficial as to suggest a reverential abstention from all criticism. Nor were the relations that had long subsisted between the rival sovereignties of so harmonious a nature as to confirm their boasted identity of origin; their chief harmony of feeling and unity of action arising from the ambition, self-aggrandisement, and indifference to the interests of their subjects which were common to both. Indeed the many feuds and discords between the Church and Empire—the inherent difficulty of deciding on the precise boundary line that separated their respective jurisdictions—could not but suggest to thoughtful minds an examination of the points in dispute, which was tantamount to, and in some cases involved, a rigid scrutiny of the bases on which rested the power both of Pope and Kaiser.

Nor did the antagonisms of the spiritual and the secular powers exhaust the sources of intellectual excitation and friction which, like similar agencies in other cases, tended to make and keep bright the faculties of those exposed to them.[2] The intestine divisions of the

[1] Cf. Ginguené, *Hist. Litt. d' Italia*, i. 154.

[2] 'L'esprit humaine,' says Ozanam (*Dante et la Philosophie Catholique au*

Papacy itself, partly on imperial, partly on ecclesiastical grounds, did something to secure a place for the 'indifference-point' of Freedom. Especially was this the case when two rival Pontiffs, one at Rome the other at Avignon, claimed, each of them, to be the sole vicegerent of heaven, and hurled his maledictions against his adversary. It was not merely a realization but an enthronization of 'Twofold Truth' when two infallibilities thus propounded opposing decrees. Not only the cynical humanist and free-thinker, but even warm advocates of the papacy might under such circumstances pardonably choose to remain in the suspense of a halting allegiance. Confessed Fallibility even was a preferable alternative to a divided Infallibility which was both impossible and contemptible.[1] The open profligacy which characterized the Papal Court at Avignon, as described by Petrarca and Ariosto, was partly the immoral excess of a freedom of which a bipartite and self-destructive spiritual power was one contributory source. Indeed the vice and depravity of the Papacy from the twelfth century to the Reformation reveal a moral skepticism in the sense of disbelief far more debasing, as well as more un-Christian, than any amount of pure intellectual suspense or religious doubt. Men could not help seeing that the interests which divided Popes and Ecclesiastics were just as selfishly secular as those which set the princes of this world in fierce array against each other. Nor was it only a moral uncertainty that these intestine discords in the bosom of the Church tended to generate; a prior feeling was the intellectual uncertainty such a phenomenon was calculated to create. Upon the unity of the Church One and Indivisible depended not only the succession of its chief ministers, but the authority of its dogmas; and in the quickening of men's minds by the varied stimulating influence of the Renaissance both these ideas were exposed to a severe critical strain long before Luther began to teach the principles of the Reformation. The sentiment was also independent in a great measure of the existence even of Antipopes, for it was unnecessary to learn the dissension of the papacy from the quarrels of two contemporaneous pontiffs when the decrees of so many successive Popes, Ecclesiastical Councils and writers in the past revealed a similar dissidence and contradiction.

xiii^e siècle, p. 40), 'aime les combats qui agitent les questions; il grandit dans les perplexités; il lui faut ces conditions sévères sans lesquelles rien n'est fertile; la peine et la douleur. Les siècles de Périclès et d'Auguste sortirent de Salamine et de Pharsale. La querelle des investitures réveilla la scholastique,' etc.

[1] On this subject see Voigt.; *Æneas Silvio, etc., als Papst Pius II.*, vol. i. p. 27; a work which throws a flood of light on the relations between the Papacy and the Renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

II. Among the agencies that contributed to create and sustain the Free-thought of the Renaissance in Italy, no small place must be assigned to the large development of commerce and intercourse with Foreign states of which Italy had been the centre from an early period. Many obvious causes conspired to give Italy a superiority in this respect above all countries on the Mediterranean. The chief of them, and the earliest in operation were the close relations subsisting between the old and new capitals of the Western Empire. It was partly a cause partly the effect of this commercial activity that Italy in the middle ages became the common home of so many different races. Foreign invasions, settlements, wars, co-operated still further in diversifying its population and producing a still greater variety of manners and customs and modes of thought. Few were the nations of Europe, fewer still those on the Mediterranean sea-board, unrepresented in the mixed population of most of the Italian Communes and sea-ports. Thus the internal condition of Italy harmonized with the external influences created by its commercial enterprise. We cannot help being reminded of the similar condition of Ancient Greece, and the impulse imparted to Free-thought by the diversity in race, culture and religion that existed among the Hellenic tribes, while a still further resemblance is suggested by the similar results of commercial activity in each case. In the South of Italy, Amalfi, and Salerno had early risen into eminence, the first commercial, the second scientific. After their settlement in Italy the Normans seemed to have transferred their native enterprise for buccaneering, to the more peaceful avocations of Commerce, and by their efforts Amalfi at one period stood at the head of the maritime towns of Italy. An admirer of the Norman race thus celebrates their mercantile talents:—

> Hæc gens est totum prope nobilitata per orbem
> Et mercanda ferens et amans mercata referre.[1]

On the shores of the Adriatic, Venice at a still earlier date had acquired a reputation for her commerce with the East. From the sixth century she had been the chief emporium for the interchange of Italian wine, oil and manufactures, for the spices, silks, carpets, the products of the looms of Damascus, Bagdad, Alexandria, and other centres of Oriental traffic. Nor did she disdain in the early portion of her brilliant career a large traffic in slaves, selling Christians to Mahometan masters, and Mahometan slaves to Christians. Until the rise of the maritime power of different Mahometan

[1] Muratori, *Antiq. Diss.*, xxx. Comp. William of Tyre, *Hist.*, lib. xviii.

states, nearly all the slave-trade of the Mediterranean was at one time in the hands of Venice. As Venice trafficked mainly with Alexandria and the Levant, Pisa carried on an active commerce with African ports nearer home. In the twelfth century we find that the Greek Emperors paid to Pisa and Genoa an annual bounty, probably to confine their lucrative trade to themselves. The wealth which Pisa acquired by successful commercial enterprise seems to have become proverbial.

"Notior urbanis et ditior ille Pisanis,"[1]

i.e. 'Richer than Pisans,' is an expression found in a writer of the twelfth century. Nor did these Italian ports limit their operations to the sea-board of the Mediterranean. They gradually found their way into the Atlantic, and Venetian ships brought the produce of the far East to the sea-ports of France, Spain and England. I have already mentioned the enormous business both in financial and general mercantile transactions carried on by Florence with all the principal countries of Europe. Now Commerce, I need hardly observe, entails, especially with peoples of alien race, religion and civilization, an interchange not only of merchandise, the products of the earth the loom and the hand, but also of mental productions, of language,[2] thoughts and opinions, and their records in books and manuscripts. The earlier literature of Italy, beginning with the eleventh century, contains ample traces of such foreign influence; the popular legends, narratives and superstitions of the time being derivable in many instances from Oriental sources, though native Italians exhibit some natural caution in the reception of an hypothesis which detracts from the originality of their own early literature. During the two following centuries, stimulated by commercial activity, and aided by the adventitious fermentation caused by the Crusades, these traces become still more marked. In the thirteenth century Dante's Divine Comedy shows us very clearly how much the Italian mind was becoming infiltrated with ideas derived from the philosophy, religion and literature of alien nations. He is himself conversant not only with Greek and Latin thinkers, but also with the thought-systems of Averroes, Avicenna, and the great Arab Free-thinker Al-Ghazzali. Nor is his acquaintance less with the native literature of Europe, *e.g.* the Provençal. Dante however recognizes the dangers to strict ecclesi-

[1] Muratori, *Antiq. Diss.*, xxx.

[2] Dr. Landau in his *Life of Boccaccio* (p. 200) rightly points out that Italian churchmen acquired Greek in order to discuss points of controversy with Byzantine monks, and Italian merchants of Venice and Genoa for purposes of commerce, long before the language was cultivated for literary purposes.

astical orthodoxy which were likely to accrue from a too familiar intercourse of East and West, whether for commercial or warlike purposes. Thus when reproaching 'the chief of modern Pharisees'—Boniface VIII.—with his war on the Colonnas, he regards his conduct as the more indefensible inasmuch as his foes were orthodox Christians, and not enemies overt or disguised of the Church—

'Avendo guerra presso a Laterano
E non co' Saracin, ne con Giudie,
Chè ciascun suo nemico era Cristiano
E nessuno era stato a vincer Acri
Ne mercatante in terra di Soldano'—[1]

where we have a clear allusion to the ill-fame and suspected heterodoxy of returning Crusaders or Oriental merchants. Similarly, Petrarca, though his sympathies were much more exclusively concentrated in the Ancient world than were those of Dante, yet evinces a knowledge of all the philosophy and literature current in his time. To Arab thought and speculation he was especially averse. He opposed Averroes in the interests of Christianity, and ridiculed some branches of Arab science. But his reason for doing so was his belief that Arab learning was just as opposed to the free culture he advocated as scholasticism itself. But more than either of his two great predecessors Boccaccio represents the cosmopolitan spirit of the Renaissance. His 'Decameron'—setting aside its language—might have been written in any one of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. It manifests a knowledge and appreciation of foreign thoughts and feelings, customs and ideas which betray the author's proclivities and the width of his sympathies. It reveals also a religious and philosophical eclecticism almost passing into indifference. Clearly it is the product of an epoch when boundaries, social, national and religious are beginning to lose their importance. When humanity rather than one particular section of it becomes the subject of investigation, religious instincts and duties in their widest acceptation, rather than particular sects and creeds, become the objects of reverence and attention.

Together with Italian Commerce the Crusades must also be considered as contributory to the Free-thought of the Renaissance. Few great events in mediæval history have produced consequences more unforeseen and anomalous than the Crusades. Increasing at first the power of the Pope and the Roman hierarchy, they tended at last to impair and diminish it. Expected to knit together the Latin and Greek Churches they made their divisions wider, and

[1] *Inferno*, canto xxvii. v. 86.

added a feeling of exacerbation to their mutual relations. Intended to destroy for ever Mahometan power in the East they really contributed to strengthen it. Undertaken as a religious war to propagate the Faith of Christ with the sword of Mahomet, and to vindicate Christian dogma against unbelievers, they really subserved the interests of Free-thought. Directly, the Crusades, with the doubtful exception of the fourth, did not affect Italy so much as other European countries, as Germany, France and England. The early establishment of the Communes had overthrown feudalism in Italy before A.D. 1200. Thus the active co-operation of this country in a movement so intimately allied with feudalism was prevented. Only among the Norman settlers in the South was there any vigorous participation with the Crusaders. Indirectly however, the effect of the Crusades was perhaps greater in Italy than in any other country in Europe. Partly this must be ascribed to the superior receptivity of the Italian nature, and to the advance of the nation in enlightenment and civilization. Partly it was a result of the intimate commercial intercourse already existing between Italy and the East. Crusaders from other European countries journeyed overland to Italy in order to embark at Venice, Pisa or Genoa. Returning Crusaders found the shipping belonging to these ports most convenient for coming back to Europe. As a rule therefore, whatever intellectual importation, whether in the form of thought or its written transcript, found its way back from the East to Europe, it was first examined and perhaps partly appropriated in Italy before it was passed on to less-favoured parts of Europe. I need not point out the enormous stimulus this traffic imparted to the commercial activity of the great maritime ports of Italy, and its addition—neither small nor unimportant—to the civilizing influences of that commerce.

Passing over their political causes, the Crusades in their primary intention are religious wars. The Cross as the symbol of *Roman* Christianity is arrayed against all systems of dis- or mis-belief. Judaism as well as Mahometanism, Greek Christianity as well as Oriental Heathendom, is ranked as its inveterate foe. The imperious dogmatic spirit so long cherished by the Church, was by a favourable conjuncture of events transformed for a time into popular fury. The preaching of the first Crusade was attended with those brutal and fanatical outbreaks against the Jews which were so common in the middle ages. The unthinking populace, stimulated in many instances by bigoted clerics, could not discriminate between the Unbelief of Pagans and that of Jews. Nor was the chivalry of Europe which followed Godfrey of Boulogne and subsequent Crusading leaders to the Holy Land a whit further advanced in toleration.

Few scenes are more discreditable to Ecclesiastical Christianity, though a direct result of its dogmatic pretensions, than the ruthless massacre of Jews and Saracens which attended the taking of Jerusalem, or the still more unutterable horrors and barbarities which marked the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade.[1] There is indeed no doubt that the first result of the Crusades was to intensify men's religious passions, and to blind them to all sense of justice and humanity.[2] Even the better qualities of chivalry, the kindness it enjoined to the weaker sex, its consideration for dependants, were quite obliterated before the unholy zeal which an intolerant orthodoxy excited. But as the Crusades proceeded, much of this feeling of pitiless antagonism seems to have died away. Probably the French barons who followed St. Louis and the English chivalry of Richard Cœur de Lion were themselves somewhat more humane than the truculent soldiers of Geoffrey of Boulogne, or the ruffian mercenaries of Baldwin Earl of Flanders and Dandolo of Venice.

Their warfare was less for orthodoxy, or greed under the guise of orthodoxy, and more for prestige; their conduct was less swayed by such ignorant fanatics as Peter the Hermit, and more by the laws of courtesy and honour inherent in chivalry. Nor could the wise and beneficent toleration of Saladin have been lost on them. In contrast with European Kings and Priests, here they beheld a mere Paynim or Heathen giving effect to lessons of Christian charity and toleration unheard of in Christian lands.[3] In his dominions all men were esteemed equal from a religious point of view. Jews were not persecuted, Christians were not forbidden to worship in their own way. On poor Jews and Christians he bestowed alms with the same consideration and impartiality as on his own co-religionaries. Men like Frederick Barbarossa might well compare such conduct to that of the chiefs of Christendom to the merited disadvantage of the latter.

[1] A new light has been thrown on this event, and incidentally on the motives and aims which animated the Crusaders generally, by 'Mr. Pears' valuable and painfully interesting monograph':—*The Fall of Constantinople, being the Story of the Fourth Crusade.* London, Longmans, 1885.

[2] In the Chansons de Geste the ordinary mode of defying Saracens to battle is the courteous formula:—

'*Felon* Paien, toz vos confonde Dex.'

[3] On the character of Saladin comp. Sedillot *Hist. des Arabes*, vol. i. p. 285. The contrast between the purer morality of Moslem rulers, and the corruption of Christian Priests and Princes, was a point of which Satirists readily availed themselves. For an interesting example see 'Sir John Maundevile and the Sultan of Egypt,' in Wright and Halliwell's *Reliquæ Antiquæ*, vol. ii. p. 113.

Indeed it was to this comparison between Christianity and Mahometanism so forcibly suggested by the Crusades that much of the wholesome influence of that movement was due.[1] No doubt the comparison might have been made nearer home had it not been for the ignorance, exclusiveness, and bigotry which the Church so diligently fostered, and which made communication with Mahometans a heinous offence. By her own proclamation of a Crusade this prohibition was removed altogether in the East, and partly in the West. The relation between the rival creeds, too, was of a different character from that which subsisted between Christianity and Judaism, or Christianity and Greek and Roman thought. In the former case the relation in its essence was not so much an antagonism as a rivalry between two faiths both springing from a common origin. While the systems of classical antiquity were almost as multifarious and as devoid of any principal of union as a rope of sand, so that their opposition to Christianity consisted in their negative standpoint—with Mahometanism on the other hand the relation was of a far more direct and positive kind. It fought Christianity with its own weapons. To the formulated belief of the Church it opposed distinct convictions of its own. Against the authority of Christ and the Pope it arrayed that of Mahomet and his prophetic descendants. The Crusades were the climax of the long rivalry that had existed between the two faiths, which in effect divided between them nearly the whole civilized world. When therefore from their actual contact in Palestine as well as from the Arab civilization of Spain certain characteristics, doctrines, and excellences seemed inferrible as pertaining exclusively to neither, the effect for free-thought and religious toleration was of an especially startling and convincing description. The philosophic thinker weighing the two religions in impartial balances, and laying due stress on the best productions of each, might conceivably take up a point of suspense between the two; at least he could hardly fail to see that an equitable decision respecting the rivals required a different standpoint from that of ordinary Ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Moreover this claim of the Moslem creed for consideration suggested to Christendom by the Crusades had other grounds on which to base itself. It was further

[1] It seems now agreed that the Crusades did not, at least directly, aid the cause of European science in the strict sense of the term. Dr. L. Leclerc, who in his *Histoire de la Médécine Arabe* has compiled a careful inventory of the numberless translations that disclosed Greek and Oriental science to European eyes, has found only two which can be traced to the East. Most of them belong to the Arab occupation of Spain. Cf. Dr. L. Leclerc, *Hist. de la Med. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 368.

enforced by the remarkable advance of Arab races not only in civilization and refinement, but in the arts and sciences. In the twelfth century—the century of the Crusades—the foremost place in Medicine, Physical Science, especially Astronomy, and in Architecture was occupied by Arabs. Even if the Koran had not contributed directly to this result it had proved no obstacle to it.[1] In the later stages of its development Mahometanism had undoubtedly manifested a plasticity, an eager appetite for knowledge, a readiness to adapt itself to new currents of thought and feeling far exceeding anything that could be attributed to Christianity as a whole. How far this might be ascribed to greater disinclination to slavish literalism, and a reliance on a body of dogmatic tradition *outside* the text of the Koran,[2] is a point we need not discuss. Whatever the original cause, the superiority in most respects of the Moslemism to the Christianity of the twelfth century is a fact every candid inquirer must concede.

That this superiority was acknowledged is amply attested by the records, fictitious as well as true, of the conversion of prominent Christians to Moslemism. I need not remind you of the ill-fame the Knights Templars acquired by their sympathy with the religion and usages of their Saracen foes. Recent investigation has shown that however exaggerated these reports, they were by no means destitute of foundation.[3] Without dwelling longer on this part of my subject, which I shall again have to touch upon, we can readily understand that the Crusader, with no imputation on his good faith or his religious perspicacity, might occasionally return from Palestine with a more impaired faith in the Dogmas of Ecclesiastical Chris-

[1] The comparative effects of the Bible and Koran respectively on the growth of liberal culture within Christianity and Islamism is a subject deserving investigation. It may be proved that the Koran both in mediæval and modern times has offered less real opposition to the advance of secular learning than the Bible in the hands of misinterpreters and fanatics has done. Prof. Dieterici speaking of the Arab culture of the tenth century, says that the influence of the Koran and Mahometan legends was only indirect. They served to satisfy the religious sentiment and set forth Religion and Philosophy as *One Truth.* '*Philosophie der Araber im X Jahrhundert*,' *Mikrokosmus*, p. 203.

[2] The *Sonnah* or Mahometan tradition was never so completely substituted for the direct teachings of the Koran as the Dogmatic Teaching of Christian Churches has been for the *ipsissima verba* of Christ.

[3] The words of De Bracy in Sir W. Scott's Ivanhoe—'The bruit goeth shrewdly out that the most holy order of the Temple of Zion nurseth not a few heretics in its bosom,' have been corroborated by modern research. Comp. *e.g.* F. Nicolai's *Versuch über den Tempelorden*, 1782. On the other side, see also Döllinger's Essay, *Der Untergang des Tempelordens*, in vol. iii. of his *Akademische Vortrage*, p. 245, and the authorities there quoted.

tianity, and a higher respect for the miscreant[1] Paynim, than before his enterprise he could have thought possible.

The literary outcome of this teaching we have in Boccaccio's celebrated story of the Three Rings. This is, considering its amplitude of meaning, the earliest declaration of religious toleration we possess in any European language. It is also the first European essay on a science which even now is only in its infancy—that of Comparative Religions. Here we have the three great Religions, Christianity, Moslemism and Judaism contrasted for the first time in the spirit of philosophy and true humanism, with no exclusive sentiment of orthodoxy and carping bigotry either on one side or the other. It is difficult to realize the full importance of this most admirable of all Boccaccio's stories, and the difficulty is not lessened by the consideration that it had long existed in other collections of Tales,[2] besides occupying a foremost place among the popular notions of his time,[3] before Boccaccio gave it immortality by shaping it in his own picturesque fancy, and embodying it in his exquisite language. Thus under the dread shadow of the Papacy, and even after the promulgation of its claim for universal sovereignty, was enounced the startling theory of a Religious Toleration which might be interpreted almost as indifference—a declaration of co-equality before God for Jews, Moslems and Christians. If the particular moment of the announcement was in striking contrast to the latest pretensions of the Papacy, it was not less so in regard to the Anti-Judaic and Mahometan sentiment of Christendom at large. Few European towns of any magnitude existed, the streets of which had not flowed with Jewish blood, while the intensity of mutual hatred between Christian

[1] Gibbon's note on the word *miscreant* is still worth reading. *Hist. R. E.*, vi. p. 441 (Bohn's Edition). Comp. Littrè Dict.: sub. voce *mécréant.*

[2] Dr. Marcus Landau, in his learned *Quellen des Decameron*, p. 62, assigns the immediate source of Boccaccio's 'three rings' to the romance of 'Buson da Gubbio' called 'the Adventurous Sicilian.' Whereupon Professor Bartoli in his *I Precursori del Boccaccio*, p. 27, remarks: 'It is most true indeed that we have there an identical story. I do not however believe this justifies us in saying that Buson was the immediate source of Boccaccio's Tale, for I find the self-same story repeated in the Hebrew Treatise *Schebet Jehuda*, in the *Gesta Romanorum*, in *Dis dou vrai aniel*, in our *Cento Novelle antiche*, and in the *Summa prædicantium* of Bromyard. I learn also from Schmidt that this story was widely diffused in the middle ages, and I find something of the same kind in the old narrative of the Twelve Ancylia of Numa. Dr. Landau in his work above-mentioned shows reason for believing that the tale is of Jewish origin (*Quellen*, p. 64). The same hypothesis is maintained in an article by M. Michel Nicolas in the *Correspondence Litteraire* for July 5th, 1857. Comp. on this subject, Burchardt, *Cultur d. Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 340. Notes.

[3] Baldelli, *Vita di Giov. Boccacci*, p. 330.

and Moslem during the middle ages and the earlier Crusades could scarcely be exceeded. Under the circumstances it was a portentous declaration that there existed no true basis for the jealousies and animosities so deeply rooted in the feeling of Christendom. No doubt by Christ Himself, had the relation of Moslemism to His Gospel come before Him, the issue would have been determined by the simple test of its efficacy in promoting love to God and love to Man; but in the eye of the Papacy no heterodoxy could be more pronounced than a disavowal of absolute and incomparable superiority for the teaching of Christ. An attempt has been made to ascribe the origin of the fabulous work,[1] *De Tribus Impostoribus* to Boccaccio's story. The attempt is refuted by the bare designation of the pretended Book. Indeed estimating its object by its title, it must, assuming its existence, have had an aim of an entirely opposite character. There is nothing in Boccaccio's story to justify the imputation of imposition. The difference between the rings is one of age not of intrinsic value. The tale if it were to have another title might be called 'De Tribus Religionibus,' or using the synonym then in use for Religion 'De Tribus Legibus.' For myself I cannot help thinking that the Book *De Tribus Impostoribus*, if really connected with Boccaccio's story, is merely the satirical construction given to it by some fanatical monk by way of bringing its moral to a *reductio ad absurdum;* or else a polemical comment upon it, put forward by some skeptical opponent of all religions alike. Hallam pronounced Boccaccio's tale skeptical.[2] No doubt it is so. If I may be allowed the paradox I should say that its truth, beauty and efficacy consists in what is termed its skepticism. The point of the story is contained in the words "E così vi dico, signor mio, delle tre leggi alli tre popoli date da Dio Padre, delle quali la quistion proponesti: ciascuno la sua eredità, la sua vera legge, e i suoi commandamente si crede avere a fare; ma chi se l'abbia, come degli anelli, ancora ne pende la quistione."[3] But the skepticism

[1] The work commonly passing under this title does not at all answer to its name, and is probably spurious. The best Edition of it is that of M. Gustave Brunet (Philomneste Junior), Paris, 1861. It may be described as a true but crude Essay on Comparative Religions. So far however from implying or asserting the falsity of the commonly received Religions, it asserts that each so far as it is in harmony with Nature and Reason, contains germs of Truth. The central proposition of the work is this: 'Religionem et cultum Dei secundum dictamen luminis naturalis consentaneum et veritati et aequitati esse,' p. 12: Cf. on this subject Burckhardt, *Cultur d. Renaissance*, ii. p. 311.

[2] *Literature of Europe*, vol. i. p. 139. Gabriel Naudé was of opinion that the story proved Boccaccio to be a perfect Atheist!! *Naudæana*, p. 83. Comp. Renan, *Averroes*, Ed. iii. p. 278.

[3] Quoted from *Opere Volgari*, i. p. 66.

herein expressed relates merely to the assumption of Special Authority, or the superiority of one over the rest. There is no skepticism implied as to the Divine origin or Ethical obligation of either creed. The standpoint is that of the philosophic thinker who can discriminate between the accidental variations which attach to, or perhaps deteriorate, each creed, and the deeper religious and moral significance common to the three alike. For my part I regard the words, uttered at such a time, as the most vigorous and outspoken reiteration of 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men' that Christendom had listened to since the coming of Christ.

Could Classical Pagandom with its multifarious aspects of thought have been described as a single religion, Boccaccio would doubtless have made the number of Rings four.[1] In many respects Greek and Roman Antiquity was much nearer to the sympathies of Humanists than Mahometanism. Sokrates and Plato, Virgil and Cicero were in far higher esteem with Petrarca and Boccaccio than Averroes and Avicenna. Possibly, so high was the estimate, religious as well as intellectual, in which the Humanists held the chiefs of classical culture, it was not thought necessary to include, with Jews and Mussulman, persons whose claims to Divine truth and immortality were so generally acknowledged. And here I cannot help pointing out the advance in point of tolerant thought which Italian Humanism had made in the interval between Dante and Boccaccio. Dante's well known pourtrayal of Mahomet as the Arch-schismatic has, as we shall soon see, all the customary marks of Ecclesiastical bigotry and malevolence. Indeed in the lines I quoted just now he seems to think animosity against Jews and Mahometans legitimate, while Boccaccio on the contrary makes the Prophet of Arabia a fellow-heir with Moses and Christ of the grace and love of the Eternal. Perhaps it might be invidious to ask how far the ecclesiastical Christianity of the nineteenth century has attained the level of Christian magnanimity and tolerance displayed by Boccaccio's Three Rings, or Lessing's immortal reproduction of it in 'Nathan der Weise.' Regarded as a literary phenomenon, it is a somewhat curious coincidence that the selfsame lesson of large-hearted charity should have impressed itself upon the German 'Sturm und Drang' of the eighteenth century as on the Italian Renaissance of the fourteenth.

Partly the outgrowth of the political and social fermentation I have briefly sketched, partly an independent development of causes

[1] Cardan however makes the number of the Great Religions four by including Paganism as one. As to the superiority of any one over the rest he leaves it to chance. 'His igitur arbitrio victoriæ relictis?'

inherent to the Italian mind, at any rate marching backwards to the middle ages, we meet early in the eleventh century an intellectual phenomenon destined to become the main source of the Free-thought of the Renaissance to which I give the general name of

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

A recent writer ascribes the commencement of this movement to the reaction which took place when men found that the world did not come to an end as the Papacy had prophesied, and as they had anticipated, in A.D. 1000: 'Whereupon they took renewed possession of the earth, and of themselves.'[1] That this circumstance helped largely to repress the excess in other-worldliness which marks the dark ages, and to suggest new conceptions of the worth of terrestrial existence, we can readily believe. But I do not think we can make it the sole or even chief impulse of the Secularization of Literature, which I should attribute to causes operating more widely and through a greater extent of time. For we must remember that Literature of a rude kind existed in Italy throughout the dark ages. Amid its political struggles, the enslavement of its population by one conqueror after another, and the social degradation and savage manners engendered by these perpetual changes, there still remained a few straggling rays of the ancient enlightenment it once possessed. Notwithstanding the animosity of the Church, the honoured names of Latin Poets were still cherished by isolated scholars, clerical as well as lay, as a kind of sacred esoteric culture—a mysterious worship veiled to the profane vulgar. With the growth of the Papacy, however, all forms of Literature became Romanized. History, Poetry, Natural Science, as well as Dialectic and Metaphysics, were enlisted in the service of the Church, all departments of human thought shared her dogmatic spirit, all were utilized for her own objects, all had to subserve her interests. Literature as a spontaneous free outgrowth of the human spirit could scarcely be said to exist.

But a momentous change now set in. The human intellect began to rouse itself from the lethargy—the bane of societies as of individuals—called 'Dogmatic slumber.' Reason so long the slave of

[1] A. Bartoli, *I Precursori di Rinascimento*, p. 19. The removal of the terror caused by the expectation of an immediate end of the world was attended by various effects, political, social and to some extent literary. Signor D'Ancona, in his *Precursori di Dante*, p. 42, points out as one of its results the impetus it gave to speculations and legends connected with the world beyond the grave.

Authority began to assert her own rights. Curiosity as to nature, humanity, literature, began to stir and disclose itself. Rudimentary science, or rather superstitions containing the germs of science, manifested incipient vitality. The human mind so long confined in the trammels of religious dogma began to exhibit a restlessness that betokened a growing dissatisfaction with the passive stolidity of its condition. The energies it had been compelled to devote exclusively to theology now demanded a wider sphere. But intellectual and religious revolutions do not at first alter the processes to which the mind has become accustomed. Guided by social instincts, and dominated by powerful associations, men generally choose to put their new wine into old bottles. The mind, in its progressive transmutations, changes not the character of its activities so much as the objects to which they have heretofore been directed; and it is only by ascertaining practically the inconvenience of older methods—the unfitness of old bottles to retain new wine—that the change is extended to one as well as the other. Hence we have in the commencement of Italian Free-thought a series of transferences of intellectual energy from particular departments of Ecclesiastical Literature to corresponding provinces of secular learning. Thus History, concerned exclusively, in mediæval times, with the record of Ecclesiastical events, began to chronicle political and other mundane affairs. The hymns and lyric poetry of the Church paved the way for poems of love and adventure, and the troubadour sang with equal erotic ardour the charms of the Virgin and of his own mistress. Legends of saints and martyrs were converted into stories of chivalry and ancient mythology; and the wandering minstrels of the Renaissance recounted, with philosophic impartiality, the adventures of Homeric heroes, of the Paladins of Charlemagne's court, or the miracles performed on a saint's tomb. The first step towards the modern Drama was taken when the miracle-plays, which at first formed part of the special services of the Church, were gradually divorced from religion, first by being played outside the Church, next by giving place to "moralities" and to subjects taken from heathen mythology, and lastly by direct imitation of Latin comedy. Nor was the secularization I speak of confined to literature. The dialectic of the schools, once the chosen but not very safe weapon of Theology, was gradually found to have applications to the whole domain of human knowledge and ratiocination; and, itself the offspring of secular learning, began to display strongly marked tendencies to revert to its original scope and object. The influence extended itself even to popular beliefs—superstition was secularized. The miracles of mediæval Romanism tended to create a greedy but unwholesome appetite for the marvellous in

Nature, and the exorcisms, predictions and general thaumaturgism of the Church prepared the way for a stronger faith in the miracles of astrology and magic.

This new direction of human energy was in itself an advance, although its object was not in every instance more intrinsically valuable to human progress than that which it tended to replace. The current of intellectual activity, though diverted from its former course, did not thereby lose its former characteristics. The fetters of dogma, credulity, and superstition, continued to clank on the limbs that had achieved a partial deliverance from them. Still it was something gained to have reached a region of speculation other than that included in religious teaching, even with the drawback of itself being some grotesque superstition like alchymy or astrology. At least the change of standpoint and object of investigation involved motion, and contact with fresh questions and problems implied a possibility of intellectual stimulus. Anything was better than the barren stagnation of superstitious dogma, and the stolid immobility generated by sacerdotalism. A sentiment more pious than wise has styled the centuries preceding the Renaissance—'the Age of Faith.' If Faith it be, it is indistinguishable from the most debasing credulity. It was a Faith which involved and perpetrated the most cruel outrages on the Reason and intelligence of humanity. The incredible extent of superstition current, not only among the people but among the clergy and other learned professions, in the tenth and two following centuries is exemplified by a curious product of the Literature of the time—I mean those compilations of general knowledge, the true ancestors of the modern encyclopædias, and the secular co-relatives of the Quodlibetal Literature of the School Theology—which by a curious coincidence seem to have preceded the Renaissance just as the Encyclopædists of France inaugurated the Revolution.[1] There is no limit to the easy faith which these purveyors of general information seem to have demanded of their hearers. Nature they contemplated through a thick dark veil of mystery and supernaturalism.[2] The earth was the abode of various kinds of marvellous beings such as centaurs, griffins, dragons, some of which derived their existence

[1] The 'all inclusive' tendencies which animate these mediæval Encyclopædists are first found in Arab learning. As a recent author remarks, 'all the great Arab Physicians were to a certain extent encyclopædists.' They cultivated and professed to know every branch of secular learning then in existence. Cf. Dr. Leclerc, *Histoire de la Médecine Arabe*, vol. i. p. 12.

[2] Comp. Prof. Bartoli's Summary of this Encyclopædic lore of the middle ages in chap. vii. of his *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, pp. 231-258, and chap. viii. of the same author's *I Primi Due Secoli della Letteratura Ital.*, pp. 220-234.

from pre-Christian antiquity, while others were the offspring of Ecclesiastical superstition. The woods were inhabited by Fauns which were engendered by insects found under the bark of trees, these were said to be born with wings but they afterwards lost them, and became satyrs having horns on their head and goat's feet.

Peasants' cottages were infested with Fairies which could not be ejected but by exorcisms. One kind of Lamiæ were mischievous sprites which crept into men's houses at night and perpetrated all manner of elfish tricks. Another kind were she-dragons inhabiting river caves: these were accustomed to steal away women who came to the rivers to bathe, and compel them to suckle their young. Geography was, as might be supposed, a fruitful source of marvels and portents. The earth was believed by some to be square, by others concave, by others flat. It was thought to be surrounded by the ocean on every side; and the story of an anchor dropped from the sky by a ship sailing on the 'waters above the firmament' was gravely reported, and as gravely credited. Islands were supposed to exist where no one could die, others into which no animal of the female sex could enter, others in which bodies buried did not putrefy, etc. A twelfth century writer describes India as the abode of men with one eye, men with one leg, headless men whose eyes were placed in their shoulders while two cavities in the breast served for nose and mouth, men who did not eat but subsisted on the odour of a certain fruit. What is remarkable in all these encyclopædic writers is their magnificent unconsciousness of ignorance. They pass from one marvel to another with no perception of the unusual character of the events they describe. No matter how startling the phenomenon they are never at a loss to account for it. They have just as little hesitation in assigning causes to earthquakes and lightning as they have to the miraculous properties of herbs and precious stones. They profess as much faith in dreams, charms and auguries as in the most commonplace occurrences and facts of daily life. The indifference thus displayed to any possible distinction between the natural and supernatural is extended to the sacred and secular. The *Speculum Majus* of Vincent of Beauvais—the chief encyclopædia of the twelfth century—is an inexhaustible treasure-house of this antique lore, and displays in profusion its most peculiar characteristics. The learned author—for learned in the sense of erudition he most certainly was[1]—quotes

[1] Compare the list by Fabricius of Books and Authors quoted by Vincent. *Biblioth. Græca*, vol. xiv. pp. 107–125. This comprises 350 names, which are cited in the *Speculum Naturale*, etc. To these might be added, says. Prof. Bartoli, about 100 other authorities cited in the other two parts of his *Speculum*.

with perfect impartiality, and as sources of co-equal authority, the works of the Ancients, the writings of the Arabs, the decrees of Christian councils and Ecclesiastical writers, and the enormous literature, if I may use the term, oral and written, of the popular traditions, legends and superstitions of his own time. In two succeeding chapters he discusses the death of Cato and the Angelic salutation of the Blessed Virgin. Extracts from the *De Arte Amandi* of Ovid are followed by a letter of Abgarus to Jesus. Side by side are dicta of Seneca and Juvenal, and miracles of the Madonna, while catalogues of Kings of England and France are in close juxtaposition with the legends of Barlaam and Josaphat.[1] To assert that this unconscious dogmatism—these extravagancies of belief—are exclusively attributable to similar phenomena within the Church would clearly be wrong. The degraded state both of Religious Belief and the Secular Learning of that period are traceable to the same general causes.[2] At the same time it is no less true that dogmatic exaggeration and religious superstition contributed to engender, corroborate, and intensify similar credulity in other directions. The natural tendency of all religious faith, based too exclusively on the supernatural, is towards extravagance. Hence the stress laid upon the purely thaumaturgic elements in any religion will be an infallible index to the level of general knowledge professed by its adherents.

When therefore Christian preachers, contemporaries of Vincent of Beauvais, vied with each other in narrating the most marvellous stories, the way was, if not prepared, made broader and easier for the astrologer and magician. Superstition was sanctioned by the sacred authority of the Church. The ratiocination was *à fortiori*. If preachers claiming inspiration of the Holy Ghost pronounce on the

Compare Bartoli, *Storia*, etc., p. 246. For a general account of Vincent de Beauvais, though written from the standpoint of Romanist obscurantism, see the Abbé Bourgeat's *Etudes sur Vincent de Beauvais*. Paris, 1856.

[1] Bartoli, *Storia*, p. 248. Cf. the same writer's *I Precursori di Rinascimento*, p. 32.

[2] That there are persons who yet admire the pious unquestioning docility of the so-called Ages of Faith is evident: still it does provoke some little surprise to find Vincent de Beauvais held up as a pattern of mediæval enlightenment in the nineteenth century, and juxtaposited with Anselm and Aquinas. The Abbé Bourgeat however does this in terms which are worth quotation if only as a literary curiosity. 'Vincent de Beauvais forme avec saint Anselem, etc., etc., etc., saint Thomas d'Aquine, saint Bonaventure et quelques autres, une sorte de Pléiade philosophique bien capable de réfuter tout ce que l'on a dit sur les ténèbres du moyen-âge, son ignorance, son obscurantisme, sa barbarie.' —*Études*, etc., p. 10.

existence of these monstrosities or wonderful events, it was a plain testimony to their existence, and a voucher for similar narratives emanating from less accredited sources. Occasionally some Bishop, or other hierarchical potentate, might be found who inveighed against the superstitions practised by Christians in their daily life;[1] but in every such case the fulmination is really directed against their pagan origin, and is part of the crusade which the Church of the middle ages carried on against everything heathen, and which comprehended in one indiscriminate anathema the works of Aristotle and Plato, and the festivities solemnized in honour of Saturn, Pan or Venus. Indeed, setting apart their pagan affinities, the Church was by no means anxious to extirpate superstitions which indirectly, if not immediately, replenished her coffers. Exorcisms *e.g.* were a far too fruitful source of income to permit a crusade against ghosts, dæmons, witches and other supernatural disturbers of men's peace. Nor did the general influence of these beliefs in awakening men's mental independence—making them accept passively whatever dogmas might be submitted to them, and prompting them to find in the Church a refuge from the malignant influences of Nature—escape the astute perceptions of mediæval Romanism. Superstition has ever been the ally of a corrupt Christianity; and it need not excite astonishment that there are still enthusiastic Romanists who look back with an eye of yearning to those 'Ages of Faith.'

But with all due abatements, the Encyclopædias of the eleventh and twelfth centuries denote an advance. Even the crude Eclecticism which huddled together fact and fiction, sacred and secular, divine and human, authorities of every age and clime in one indiscriminate mass, was, for the time being, a higher standpoint than that afforded by the Church. It was a secular horizon of belief which merged Christianity with the supposed convictions of humanity; and was so far a rude acknowledgment of the universality and impartiality of the laws of the world and the dealings of Providence. It also indicated the existence and growth of a curiosity from which, notwithstanding its infirm efforts at starting, much might be expected in the future. And it demonstrated the existence of an acquisitive power of the human intellect, now revived for the first time since the decline of Greek and Roman learning. Men like Vincent of Beauvais were not satisfied with investigating one department of nature or science. They comprehended in their scope 'omne scibile' 'everything knowable' and thus betrayed their large conceptions of the range of

[1] Comp. St. Éloi's (Minister of King Dagobert and Bishop of Noyon) address on this subject quoted in Lacroix's *Sciences et Lettres du Moyen Age*, p. 262.

Nature and Knowledge, as well as of the powers of the human mind.[1] 4thly, Although nothing can be more crude or illogical than the divisions under which the Encyclopædists detail their erudition, yet some attempt at classification is made—Vincent of Beauvais *e.g.* divides his Speculum into 'Naturale, Doctrinale, Historiale.' Thus we detect some initiatory attempts at orderly arrangement, without which indeed all progress in knowledge is impossible.

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

II. Goliardic Poetry.

Another and prior manifestation of the 'Secularization of Literature' meets us in the Goliardic Poetry of the eleventh and three following centuries. It would perhaps be hardly correct to call the Goliards Free-thinkers, and yet there is no designation that conveys with equal distinctness their real attitude to Mediæval Christianity. They 'appear to have been,' says Mr. Wright,[2] 'in the clerical order, somewhat the same class as the jongleurs and minstrels among the laity—riotous and unthrifty scholars who attended the tables of the richer ecclesiastics, and gained their living and clothing by practising the profession of buffoons and jesters.' This was no doubt one part of their character; but if we may judge of the class generally, by the remains of their poetry that have come down to us, it was not the whole. The Goliards represent various species of reactions from the ecclesiastical dogma and practice of the middle ages. Against its Belief they advocate Free-thought. To its asceticism they oppose naturalism; to its austerity, laxity; to its religion, humanity; to its excessive 'other-worldliness' they oppose a 'this-worldliness' perhaps as excessive. Their poetry is clearly the outcome not of one

[1] A curious insight into this mediæval omniscience is afforded by Picus of Mirandola's treatise *De omni re scibile*. It consists of 900 propositions on every conceivable subject, which he offered to defend against all comers. With a stretch of generosity only possible in an age of chivalry he further expressed his willingness to pay the expenses of all antagonists from a distance.

[2] *Poems ascribed to Walter Mapes*, Intro., p. 10. These wandering scholars are amusingly described by a contemporary in the following terms: 'Urbes et orbem circuire solent scholastici, ut ex multis litteris efficiantur insani . . . ecce quærunt clerici Parisii artes liberales, Aureliani auctores, Bononiæ codices, Salerni pyxides, Toleti dæmones, et nusquam mores.'

Comp. Bartoli, *Storia*, p. 261. For the derivation of the word 'Goliard' see the same work, p. 262, note 1.

but of many and various tendencies, though converging in the general direction of liberty, and emancipation from ecclesiastical thraldom. Besides the burlesques, parodies and extravaganzas in which the Goliard indulged his favourite rollicking Rabelaisian humour, he also sang with tenderness and true poetic feeling of Nature, human life, and love. He thus evinced somewhat of the natural passion and zest for enjoyment that distinguished Pagandom; and which *ipso teste* Ecclesiasticism had not quite obliterated. That specimens of the Goliardic muse are rare before the tenth century[1] is only what we might have expected; but their rarity is compensated by the complete freedom from the dominant religionism of the dark ages which they disclose. In an early specimen of this poetry we have an exquisite picture of the delights of the spring-tide, conceived in a mood most antagonistic to ecclesiastical pessimism.[2] The Goliard recounts the breaking up of winter ice by the soft breezes of spring, the spreading of new life and verdure over the whole of Nature, the springing up of flowers manifold in colour and perfume. He expatiates on the newborn shade of the grove, on the murmuring of brooks, on the singing of the nightingale, the enamelling of meadows by various coloured flowers, the delights of walking in the summer shades, and of plucking the fragrant rose and lily. Nor are there wanting, as naturalistic pendants to the picture, the delights of human love and feasting, the worship of Venus and Bacchus.[3] This topic of the annual resurrection of Nature, together with the relations direct and indirect it bears to humanity, was a favourite one with the Goliard. That his treatment of it verges occasionally on sensuality is only what we might expect from the tendency of all reactions to the extreme of antagonistic sentiment. Moreover he is frequently a borrower from the lyric poetry of Antiquity; and his thought as well as his rhythm sometimes echoes the poems of Horace, Ovid and Catullus. In this respect the Goliardic poetry may be called the last surviving child of classical literature, while it is certainly one source of the Provençal and chivalresque poetry which succeeded. One effect of its double affiliation to Heathenism and Christianity is the curious amalgamation of 'praise of love and wine' with expressions of religious devotion which it exemplifies[4]—a feature which we shall find to be common more or less to all the literature of the Renaissance. With the

[1] Bartoli, *Storia*, p. 260.

[2] Bartoli, op. cit., p. 263.

[3] Bartoli, op. cit., p. 266. Comp. *Poems ascribed to Walter Mapes*, passim, See also 'Carminum Resonantium,' specimen in Wright's *Early Mysteries*, pp. 114, 115.

[4] Comp. Bartoli, *Storia*, p. 273. Wright's *Early Mysteries*, p. 120.

vagrant and half-pagan Goliard however, the naturalism assumes occasionally a violent and aggressive aspect, as if it were minded to assert itself offensively against the religious prepossessions of Christendom. But we shall probably do well not to generalize too largely from isolated manifestations of feelings which must, on the hypothesis of men of mediæval times being like men of other times, have found occasional expression. Besides which, these songs were sometimes not only the productions of those who made itinerant minstrelsy their calling, but were the wild extravaganzas of mediæval students, and therefore their pretended devotion to Bacchus and Venus may have no more exact relation to the general literature or sentiment of their time, than the drinking songs of students in later and more civilized periods. But the abatement here suggested for youthful libertinism cannot be extended to other aspects of Goliardic poetry. Certainly the freedom which these boisterous spirits allow themselves in dealing with the beliefs and worship of the Church is not exceeded, even if it be equalled, by the freest productions of the Renaissance. The most sacred functions and formulas of the Church became the objects of impious parodies and burlesques. They celebrated *e.g.* masses of drunkards and gluttons, they composed parodies of the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and portions of the Gospel.[1] But it may be doubted whether the attempts of the Goliard—offensive as they are to us—were likely to excite horror among his contemporaries. The neutral territory dividing sacred from profane was then, as we know, not very carefully marked out. The Church herself, in her miracle-plays, trespassed far beyond the border which modern sentiment has prescribed for irreverence and impiety. Moreover, it was not so much Christianity in its earliest and simplest form, as in its "counterfeit resemblance" of Romanism, that roused the ire of our errant free-singer. The unholy greed of the Great Babylon, where everything is sold and bought, is a favourite topic of his muse. The lines :—

'Roma caput mundi est
Sed nil capit mundum
Quod pendit a capite
Totum est immundum.'[2]

disclose his general sentiment on this fruitful theme. Nor does he spare the chief administrators of the Papal tyranny. The lash of his

[1] Bartoli, op. cit., pp. 276–277.

[2] These lines are from the remarkable poem 'Golias in Romanam Curiam.' *Poems ascribed to Walter Mapes*, p. 37.

satire and invective is applied without stint not only to the Pope, but to cardinals, bishops, abbots and monks, especially when the last-named are Cistercians.[1] 'It is worthy of note,' says Professor Bartoli,[2] 'to see these obscure poets of the twelfth century raising the cry of revolt against that long-continued tyranny over the human conscience, against the ambition that aspired to universal sovereignty. It is inspiriting to find that tradition of holy indignation 'against the implacable foe of civilization, and to find it in the Saturnian Era of Romanism, in those centuries to which many, even to-day, revert with longing as the happy ages of Faith.' And if this sacred zeal for Freedom was occasionally tainted by licence, we may remember the provocations the freer thinkers and Reformers of that time were perpetually receiving; nor must we forget—what the remains of Goliard poetry amply attest—the distinction that existed between the various members of a class whose chief common attribute was Bohemianism and literary vagabondage. The vehement language common to the more thoughtful as well as to the wilder Goliard was justified in the former case by the corruptions he saw around him. One of these enounces a plea for the severity of his satire which must be pronounced irrestible:—

> 'When I see evil men in their riches delighting,
> When vice is triumphant, and virtue needs righting,
> With—lust and not love men to marriage inciting,
> How can I help a satire inditing?'[3]

The Goliards were thus in many respects precursors of the Protestant Reformers; and this accounts, as has been observed,[4] for the popularity of their poetry in the sixteenth century. Without pretending to a high moral and religious standpoint, for which their general character and irregular life unfitted them, they possessed enough common sense, and a sufficiently acute perception of human nature and the essentials of religion, to impel them against the organized hypocrisy and ambition of Romanism. They were not preachers of the Newer Faith; but, in their rôle of popular satirists, they aided its advent.

I have already remarked the devotion of the Goliard to classical antiquity. Their semi-Pagan instincts brought them into closer union with the freer spirits of the Roman Empire than with the authorities of the Church. They therefore contributed materially to

[1] Comp. *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, p. 54.
[2] *Storia*, etc., p. 281.
[3] *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, p. 153.
[4] Mr. Wright's Preface to *Poems of Walter Mapes*, p. xxiv.

accelerate the Renaissance, considered as a secular movement of pure Humanism. Together with the old moralities in which the lives and adventures of Pagan heroes were 'moralized' for the instruction of the people, their poetry, sang or recited in taverns, at fairs and markets, and generally in places of public concourse,[1] was a chief source of popular information as to the personages of Antiquity. They took as their themes episodes of the Iliad, the adventures and death of Hector, the fall of Troy, or they recounted the adventures of Æneas, the misfortunes of Dido and other favourite classical stories. The Gods of Olympus were often nearer to these wild spirits than the invisible Deity of Christianity, or perhaps it would be truer to say that they did not discriminate between one and the other. They saw no impropriety in recognizing the Divine omniscience by a heathen formula—*cor patet Jovi*,[2] and were conscious of no incongruity in identifying the exploits of Zeus, or the labours of Herakles, with events in the life of Christ. They incited each other to drink by the phrase *imitemur superos*. They saluted their mistresses by heathen names—Dido, Niobe, Helen, Venus, etc. They were ready in the application of Pagan instances to illustrate the events of their own time, and manifested much wit and shrewdness in the process.[3] Their undisguised heathen proclivities laid them open to the satire afterwards lavished on the Humanists of the Renaissance.

> 'For their God they all take Bacchus,
> And for Mark they all read Flaccus,
> In lieu of Paul they Virgil choose,
> And for Matthew Lucan use.'[4]

We may therefore date from the Goliards that confused blending of Heathen with Christian tradition which is so characteristic of the Renaissance, and which distinguishes Christian Free-thought down to the commencement of the eighteenth century. The Church, as may

[1] The practice of singing verses in public was not confined to itinerant clerics, minstrels and *jongleurs*. As late as the sixteenth century there are woodcuts representing Lorenzo di Medici himself singing to the citizens of Florence.

[2] *Poems ascribed to Walter Mapes*, p. 74.

[3] Compare *e.g.* these lines on the rapacity of the Papal Curia :—

> 'Jupiter dum orat
> Danem, frustra laborat
> Sed eam deflorat
> Auro dum se colorat. . . .'
>
> Bart., op. cit., p. 288.

[4] Bart., op. cit., p. 285.

be supposed, did not regard with favour the irregular lives and lawless sentiments of her vagrant children. It was not so much their lax morality as their free-thought, and their invectives against Papal hypocrisy and corruption, that gave offence. They were accordingly often denounced by the Romish hierarchy with the customary vituperation and anathemas. But little recking abuse which their disdain of the 'Great Babylon' induced them to treat with scant respect, these merry minstrels still pursued their vocation, singing of life and love, of Nature and freedom, of joy and feasting whenever they could obtain an audience. The residences of free-thinking cardinals and jovial bishops and abbots, rather than the castles of feudal barons, constituted their chief 'houses of call.' In the former, they were certain of finding circles by which their caricature of monkish Latinity, their classical allusions, their puns and jests were sure of appreciation, as well as of their usual wage of cast-off clothing and abundance of food and drink. Their employment as popular and lay minstrels began to fail when their language—the colloquial Latin of the middle ages—was transmuted into the dialects which gave birth to the Romance languages; though their songs still continued to enliven many a convent refectory, and to amuse the guests of cardinals and prelates for some centuries afterwards.

It would take us too far afield to consider all the relations that exist between the Goliard poetry, especially as to its tone and spirit, and subsequent kindred developments of the secularization of literature. The chief tendencies that distinguish it, its exuberant naturalism, its mocking spirit, its love of jesting and profane raillery are found to characterize succeeding outgrowths of Romance Literature. The '*Chansons de Geste*,' and 'Poems of Adventure' of the *jongleur*, the *Fabliaux* and *Contes* of the earliest French novelists, and, somewhat later, the prose Novelists of Italy are all permeated by the Goliard spirit of Free-thought. The *Jongleur* and Fabulist carry on the warfare with sacerdotal corruption and hypocrisy, and the free criticism of Romish dogmas initiated by the Goliards, some of them assuming not only their spirit and language, but the mask of their semi-clerical callings. These singers and conteurs burlesque the offices, and parody the formularies, of the Church. They ridicule excommunication, mock at the doctrines of Purgatory and Hell-fire, and view with suspicion every dogma and function which the Church has made a source of revenue. Some idea of the extent of their freedom may be obtained by an examination of the works of Rutebœuf, a Trouvère of the thirteenth century. This writer attacks in a mingled spirit of hardihood and mockery most of the beliefs and prepossessions of his time. Rome is saluted as the fountain of all evils:—

'De Rome vient li max qui les vertus asome
* * * * *
Rome, qui déust estre de nostre loi la fonde
Symonie, avarice, et tos max i abonde:[1]

He satirizes Pope, Cardinals and Friars, depicts the irregular life, the insatiable greed and dishonesty of the clergy generally, reveals some curious details as to the working of Romanist dogmas, *e.g.* Prayers to the Virgin,[2] ridicules and burlesques Belief in Purgatory and Prayers for the dead,[3] throws the cold water of common sense upon the Crusades and exposes the mischiefs, national, social and religious, that attended those holy enterprizes.[4] Rutebœuf, though a remarkable writer, is only one of a considerable number of Free singers who opposed themselves, in a spirit of liberty, not unalloyed with licence, to the beliefs, usages and preconceptions of mediæval Christianity; and whose works are even now only beginning to be appreciated in their true relation to European culture. You will not need any description of the purport of the better known of these free legends, those *e.g.* of Reynard the Fox,[5] and the Romance of the Rose.[6] They are really popular satires on the beliefs of Romanism. They are exponents of a late-born but widely diffused sentiment which recognizes the conflicting interests of humanity and sacerdotalism, and which dares prognosticate the victory of the former over the latter. By these writers all beliefs and usages of the time are presented with their 'seamy side' outwards, and are regarded as fitting objects of criticism, possibly also of ridicule. They are, as I have said, legitimate successors, in everything but language, of the Goliards, and they contemplate the fabric of mediæval thought from a Goliardic standpoint. Nor are numerous successors of these free-spirits wanting in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the latter indeed the whole of the popular literature—the ballads,

[1] Œuv. Comp., ed. Jubinal, vol. i. p. 233.

[2] Œuv., vol. i. p. 329.

[3] '*Cest li Testament de l'Ane.*' Œuv., ed. Jubinal, i. p. 273.

[4] '*La Desputizons dou Croisié et dou Descroizié,*' i. p. 124. The Cathari and Waldensians were vehemently opposed to the Crusades, and regarded their sanction by the Popes as a deadly sin. D'Argentré, *Coll Judic.*, i. 57.

[5] Comp. Bartoli, *Storia*, etc., p. 308.

[6] M. Martin calls John de Meung the principal author of this Romance, 'un Rabelais du Moyen Age,' and adds, 'on peut dire qu'il depasse d'avance Rabelais dans la Negation, car le cynicism est chez lui moindre dans le langage et plus radical dans le fond, et il est loin d'avoir au même degré que Rabelais, ces entrailles humaines, cette philosophie de bon cœur et de grand sens, qui rachète la licence du curé de Meudon.'—*Hist. France*, iv. p. 574.

satires, tales, burlesques and farces—of France, Germany, Italy and England are quite permeated by this free spirit, and enamoured of its free expression. Rabelais may, in tone and method, claim to be the last of the Goliards, while the most remarkable of the later writings animated by its spirit were the famous 'Literæ obscurorum Virorum.'

The Goliardic poetry belongs especially to the Church. It is the composition of men who if not clerics themselves were hangers on to the skirts of Prelates and Cardinals. Their muse employs the language of the Church. It is the latest literary offshoot of colloquial Latinity, before the birth of the Romance languages. But this event introduces us to another phase of the 'Secularization of Literature.' I mean that which we have in Provençal Literature.

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

III. Provençal Poetry.

Provençal Poetry, as a whole, may be regarded as the combined product of two influences that came into operation in the eleventh century. The first being the rise of chivalry, the second the rapid transmutation, in the South of France, of low mediæval Latin into the Langue d'Oc. Chivalry has often been called the poetry of Feudalism; but it is not an essential attribute of the Feudal system, nor is it contemporaneous with it in origin. The humanizing effects of loyalty to duty, pity for the weak, generosity and unselfishness which it inculcated, begin to be especially marked in the twelfth century.[1] In its origin, and many of its qualities, Chivalry may claim to be an offshoot of Arab culture and literature. In fact there are two sources or two ages of European chivalry; the first before and independent of the Crusades, derived from peaceful intercourse with Arabs settled in Spain and the South of France and Italy, as well as from commercial intercourse with those of the Levant and the north coast of Africa. The second, after the Crusades, bearing the impress of those expeditions and diffusing the gentleness, magnaminity and culture derived from association with the soldiers and courtiers of Saladin. Nor were the newer refining influences imparted by the now civilized Saracen, whether Eastern or Western, exclusively of a social kind. The Poetry and Literature of the Arabs found entrance into Courts and Literary circles in France and Southern Italy, just as their philosophy and medical science obtained a hearing in mediæval schools and universities. Of this popular Arabic Literature,

[1] Comp. Littré, *Hist. de la Langue Fran.*, i. p. 178.

diffused as all such literature must be before the age of printing by wandering minstrels (*raouis*), the two themes were love and warlike deeds. Just as the Jongleur and Troubadour sang in the Baron's hall, or to a street crowd, their romance of love and heroism, so did the errant Saracen singer dilate on the same topics in the tent of the Bedouin Sheik, or in the homes of opulent Moorish merchants. Thus both the taste for chivalrous romance, and the customary method of its gratification, are legacies derived in a great measure from Saracen settlers in Europe; and the poetry of the Troubadours, setting aside certain peculiarities of taste, turns of imagination which are referrible to difference of race, thought and religion, is really modelled on that of the Arabs.[1] Nor is it only a resemblance of literary product, and its diffusion by the same method of wandering minstrels, that here meets us. The style and rhythm of the Troubadour are copies from his Arab teacher, and even the instrument on which the Jongleur and Troubadour accompanied their songs, was the three-stringed lyre which his Arab brother-singer[2] had long employed for the self-same purpose.

It will result from these remarks that the main sources of Provençal Literature are to be found in the two great settlements of Saracens in Europe: first in Spain and the South of France in the seventh and eighth centuries, the second in Sicily and Calabria, in the ninth and tenth centuries.[3] Italy lay between these two sources of Arab enlightenment, but it was from the latter that she acquired her earliest leavening of Provençal Poetry. From the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, permeated by the Saracenic civilization of the conquered race, a continuous stream set in of Troubadours and their characteristic minstrelsy towards the Courts and towns of South Italy. This southern stream was met, somewhat later, by a northern influx which had its source in Provence and the country round Toulouse. The latter was greatly increased by the nefarious crusade which Innocent III. directed against the peaceable, liberal and comparatively speaking cultured inhabitants of South France, which had the effect of driving the Troubadours from their native home, and dispersing

[1] Sismondi, *De la Litterature du Midi*, etc., vol. i. chap. 3. This, it may be added, is the usual theory which more recent French historians seem inclined to discard, though less on historical grounds than from a natural but not commendable wish to preserve the indigenous character of Provençal poetry. Comp. *e.g.* M. C. Aubertin, *Hist. de la Langue et de la Litterature Françaises au Moyen Age*, vol. i. p. 296.

[2] Bartoli *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 47 and notes.

[3] For an enumeration of the advantages conferred by the Saracenic invasion on Sicily and Calabria, comp. Sedillot, *Hist. Gen. des Arabes*, i. p. 308.

them through the northern half of Italy. Not that these two streams of Provençal Literature exhaust all the sources of chivalrous and literary culture which Italy possessed in the eleventh and twelfth century. In middle Italy also, the *chansons de geste*, the deeds of chivalry, the legend of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, the prowess of Charlemagne's Paladins were themes which itinerant minstrels sang everywhere, both in the private houses of the wealthy and to crowds assembled in the streets.[1] Later on, with the revival of classical literature, these popular singers added to their *repertoire* stories of ancient mythology; and the old Homeric rhapsodist who sang the anger of Achilles and the death of Hector[2] to the Hellenic tribes 600 B.C. seemed to have come to life again in mediæval Italy from his sleep of eighteen centuries.

Thus in its very origin, Provençal Poetry may be said to have been pledged to a certain freedom of thought and liberty of utterance. Forcibly stimulated, if not altogether engendered, by Arab literature and Mahometan culture, it found its chosen abode among Courts and peoples whose literary, political and religious sympathies all pointed in the direction of Freedom, and aversion to the tyranny of Rome. The themes it discussed contravened directly or indirectly all the religious traditions of mediæval Christianity. Its gay science (el gai saber) was *et nomine et re* opposed to the gloom and asceticism of mediæval Christianity. Its celebration of chivalry and its carnal prowess was a tacit reproach to the passive virtues of mediæval saints. Its stress upon the concerns of this life conflicted with the excessive but simulated other-worldliness of the Papacy. The sense of mental independence and individual self-assertion which every free literature naturally generates was quite antagonistic to the helpless imbecility which the Romish priesthood laboured to induce. Remembering the combined superstition and corruption of the Church, we can imagine the new life, the unrestrained joyousness, the sense of freedom, which the tendencies and indirect influences, more than the overt teachings, of Provençal Literature served to diffuse. A charming picture of the popularity of the Troubadours and the reign

[1] Comp. Littré, *Hist. de la Langue Fran.*, i. p. 176.

[2] Poggio, in his *Facetiæ* (Edition Liseux, vol. i. p. 132), has an absurd story of a man who after listening intently day after day to an Improvisator engaged in declaiming the deeds of Hector, was greatly pained to hear him announce that on the morrow he would conclude his recitations with the death of Hector. By means of bribes he contrived to postpone time after time the death of so brave a warrior. But his means being at last exhausted, the Improvisator pursued his theme, the poor man accompanying the recitation with tears and groans.

of song and music in Provence we have in a few sentences of Raimon Vidal's Treatise on metrical art, which I transcribe from Mr. Hueffer's work on the Troubadours:[1]—'All Christendom,' he says, 'Jews and Saracens, the emperor, kings, dukes, counts and viscounts, commanders, vassals and other knights, citizens and peasants, tall and little, daily give their minds to singing and verse-making, by either singing themselves or listening to others. No place is so deserted or out of the way, that, as long as men inhabit it songs are not sung either by single persons or by many together; even the shepherds in the mountains know of no greater joy than song. All good and evil things in the world are made known by the Troubadours.' The last phrase indicates the peculiar combination of bard, musician, literateur, chronicler, newsman which were bound up in the calling of a Troubadour, and which made his teaching a kind of secular education for the people. But the Church soon grew suspicious of a culture that did not emanate from herself, did not speak her language,[2] express her thoughts, or adopt her teachers, and was assumed to be contaminated with the association and sympathy of Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics. The Troubadours in truth were free-thinkers. Not that they directly opposed or in most cases even criticized the dogmatic structure of the Church; but they ignored them, and that of itself was suspicious. Besides which, their thought and teaching pointed, as we have seen, in a direction diametrically opposed to sacerdotalism. No more than this was needed to alarm the bigotry and rouse the tyranny of Rome. To what purpose was it to wage war on infidels beyond seas when those near home were allowed to go free? Accordingly Innocent III. proclaimed that nefarious crusade—one of the worst of the many outrages which Romish Christianity has perpetrated against humanity and civilization. The sacred symbol of the cross—so often arrayed against the spirit and teaching of the crucified—was uplifted in this unholy mission, and the pledge of divine love and spiritual freedom, was degraded into an emblem of inhuman savagery, foul lust, and revolting cruelty.

The crusade against the Provençals concerns us only in its relation to Free-thought. We may therefore pass over that horrible picture of religious fanaticism—the bloodthirsty barbarity of Simon de Montfort—the ruthless massacre of whole towns and villages[3]—the contemplation of churches whose pavements were covered knee-deep

[1] P. 128.

[2] The use of the Provençal language was forbidden to students by a Bull of Pope Innocent IV. in 1245.

[3] Comp. on this subject H. Martin's *Hist. de France*, vol. iv. p. 32.

with the blood of the unarmed crowd—most of them women and children—who had vainly sought refuge in them—the numberless detailed scenes of spoliation and depravity perpetrated by the 'soldiers of the cross'—the heartless cynicism and inhumanity with which they avowed their shameless deeds—the pitiful silence, desolation and misery that followed the footsteps of the Papal hell-hounds—the transmutation of a lovely champaign country, redolent of prosperity, quiet felicity and rural beauty, to a wild desert, defouled with the unburied corpses of its peaceable inhabitants, and with the blood-stained ashes of their once happy homes. The crusade I have hinted, was really directed against Free-thought, secular learning and enlightenment. These and not the dual Deities of the Manichæans, nor the peculiar but innocent fancies of the Catharists stirred the holy zeal of Innocent, and the inhuman truculence of his worthy lieutenant Simon de Montfort. But like all such outrages on civilization the attempt recoiled on its perpetrators. No doubt Provençal Literature was in a great measure extinguished. The language of its war songs and love ditties gradually ceased to exist, though this was in part a natural operation dependent on the laws which govern the growth and decay of languages. The happy home of the Troubadours was demolished. Its laws and customs completely reversed. Instead of the mild sway of the Counts of Toulouse,[1] the Inquisition erected its detestable tribunal in that town, from henceforth to be distinguished in history as the ferocious persecutor of all heretics. But on the other hand the event contributed to disperse the Troubadours and their art throughout Europe. Those who escaped the Papal butchery added a new theme to their songs of chivalry. They described in words of glowing indignation the character of this peculiar propaganda of 'Peace on earth, good will to men.' Professor Settembrini, in his 'Lectures on Italian Literature'[2] quotes a *Serventes* or poetical diatribe by one of these minstrels in which Rome is anathematized with a heartiness of vituperation that recalls her own fulminations. Here is a specimen:—

'No wonder, O Rome, that the world is in error, because thou hast imbrued this age in affliction and in war, and by thee both merit and pity are dead and buried. Rome, thou deceiver, source and root of all evils, by thee the good king of England was betrayed.'

[1] On the character of Raimund VI., comp. Martin, *Histoire de France*, iv. p. 19.

[2] Vol. i. p. 56. Comp. the most damning testimony of a Troubadour as to the iniquitous character of the crusade contained in M. Fauriel's *Histoire de la Crusade contre les Albigeois*, etc., Par. 1837.

'Rome thou deceiver, Avarice blinds thee. Thou fleecest thy flock while still living. O may the Holy Spirit that took human flesh listen to my prayers, and break thy beak, because thou art false and villainous to us and to the Greeks.'

'Rome, thou devourest the flesh and the bones of thy silly victims, and leadest the blind with thyself into the ditch,' etc.

'The fire of hell await thee, O Rome,' etc., etc.

Most of these expatriated minstrels turned their faces to North Italy, and found a warm welcome in the Free towns and in the houses of the nobility and opulent citizens. There they both kept alive the story of Roman tyranny and barbarity, and aided in the diffusion of the freer culture that was then extending itself from one end of Italy to the other. It would indeed be difficult to overstate the debt which early Italian Literature owes to that of the Provençals. Setting aside the language, all the earlier mental products of Italy, up to the time of Dante, are hardly more than reproductions of the Poetry of the Troubadours. Their themes, modes of thought and diction, their rhythm and style are copied with extreme, and even servile, punctiliousness. The general subject of these literary firstfruits, which are themselves Sicilian, and hence connected geographically with one main source of chivalresque poetry, was that which especially occupied the pens and lyres of the Troubadours, viz., Woman's Love. This harmonized with the new Cultus of the Virgin, which since the time of St. Bernard had taken such vigorous root in the religious sentiment of Catholicism, and which forms in reality the devotional side of chivalry. Thus the lays of the Troubadour expressed with equal enthusiasm either the charms of his frail earthly mistress or the physical beauty with which his imagination invested the Madonna. If the intimate relation of such divergent objects of adoration sometimes imparted a laxity of thought and sensuousness of expression to what was a religious feeling, it also had the effect of directing into human channels sentiments hitherto regarded as exclusively divine. It therefore aided in the great task of the Renaissance—that of humanizing mediæval Theology. The result of this process, both in itself and in elevating to an idealistic extreme the charms of womanhood, we shall see further when we come to Dante and Petrarca.

An incidental proof of the effect of Provençal Poetry in advancing Free-thought is lastly to be found in its continual association with all the most progressive culture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Troubadours, Jongleurs, Improvisatore, were continual attendants on learned Princes, and the companions of learned men. In the Court of that enlightened sovereign Frederick Barbarossa—the most remark-

able example of Free-thought and Religious Tolerance in the age preceding the Renaissance.—Troubadours and their productions occupied a prominent position. As professors of *belles Lettres*, they intermingled as a relaxing and recreative element among the arid studies and avocations of the mathematicians, Aristotelians and physicians who frequented that Court. They formed part, too, of the personal *entourage* of that benign and tolerant prince William II. of Sicily. They were also attendants on the petty Moorish Princes in Spain, and associated on terms of equality with the mathematicians and philosophers those liberal potentates fostered.[1] The marks of this learned intercourse are still traceable in the remains of Provençal Poetry. Hence while that Poetry constituted the popular Literature of Italy before the birth of any indigenous product of the kind, it prepared the way for and stimulated the growth of that native learning. It also liberalized to a certain extent the culture and erudition, and helped to give lightness and flexibility to the style of philosophers and men of learning: in short, without its humanizing and Free-thinking influences, Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, the noblest products of Italian culture would have been inpossibilities.

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

IV. Mysteries and Moralities.

A certain secondary influence on the Secularization of Literature which prepared the way for Italian Free-thought must, in the next place, be assigned to the mysteries, moralities and general scenic representations which in some form or other go far back into mediæval times.[2]

The early Church in its warfare against Paganism could hardly have omitted the Roman theatre from the scope of its animosity. Indeed few aspects of Heathenism in the latter days of the Roman Empire merited more the reprobation of Christian teachers; and certainly few things contributed more to the moral degradation which marks so profoundly the decadence of the Roman power, than the fondness of the people for theatrical exhibition and spectacular shows. Hence we cannot feel surprised that Tertullian, Augustine, Basil launched out into bitter invectives against the Theatre, that they bestowed on it the appellations 'Sacrarium Veneris,' 'caveas

[1] Comp. Sismondi, *Litterature du Midi*, etc, vol. i. chap. iii.

[2] Some of the earliest mysteries date so far back as the end of the fifth century. Comp. Jubinal *Mystères inedits*, 1837, passim.

turpissimas Diaboli.'[1] This strenuous opposition of the Church combined with other causes political and social, especially the disturbed condition of Italy from the fifteenth century onwards, gradually effected the extinction of the old theatrical tradition derived from Greece and Rome. The precise time when this took place is differently stated. A French critic, M. Charles Louandre, who has carefully investigated the matter, places it about 700 A.D. But it is easier to repress any specific manifestation of the natural instincts of civilized humanity than to destroy the sources whence it springs. Accordingly we find that long before the disappearance in Italy of all interest in and knowledge of the classic drama, rudimentary modes of scenic representation had sprung up within the Church itself, forming indeed a portion of her ordinary worship. I allude to the ancient Mysteries and Moralities. The Mysteries were, in the first instance, mere paraphrases in dialogue either of Scriptural narratives or ecclesiastical legends. They were unaccompanied either by dramatic action or scenic display. Their sole office was to pourtray more vividly, by the aid of two or three interlocutors, some scene in the Bible, or in the lives of saints. Later on they developed in the direction both of scenic representation and of dramatic action and dialogue. The great events in the life of Christ came to be set forth in a picturesque form, sometimes in dumb show, at other times, with the accompaniment of narrative and dialogue. Nor were these historical representations restricted to sacred narratives: sometimes the legends of Pagandom were employed to teach moral lessons after the manner of the Gospel Parables; and when the moral was inculcated as a distinct and permanent part of the representation the piece was called a Morality. Allegory and symbolism are indirect modes of thought and teaching common to all imaginative races. In early Christianity they constituted, as we know, prepotent influences in its literature and worship. Allegorical personages such as Vice, Virtue, Indolence, Luxury, etc. were employed at a very early period in the histrionic attempts of the Church, from whence they passed into the initial stages of every drama in Europe. The indirect methods of allegory, combined with freedom in its application, enabled the Church to utilize, for her own purposes, histories and legends, perhaps of popular interest, which in their *prima facie* acceptation were worse than useless. Thus the events of the Old Testament of whatever character were Christianized by Allegory. Notwithstanding the strain sometimes put upon them, considered as historical narratives, or their obvious distortion, regarded as stories of questionable

[1] Comp. Bartoli, *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 174, and *Storia*, etc., p. 200.

morality, they were rendered not only innocuous, but improving and edifying by being run into the symbolical moulds of the Church. A collection of the fantastic adaptations by which the events of Jewish history were twisted into types and emblems of Christianity would be a literary curiosity.[1] Nor was it only the events of the Bible that were thus treated. Those of heathen antiquity received a similar adaptation. All the symbols, persons and events of Greek and Roman history were types of corresponding personages, etc. described in Sacred Literature. Thus, to quote Professor Bartoli,[2] 'The Peacock, the bird sacred to Juno, employed on Roman monuments to signify Apotheosis, expressed on Christian tombs the immortality of the soul. The Phœnix typified the Resurrection. In the catacombs of St. Calixtus, Orpheus playing on the lyre is a symbol of Christ, who with the beauty of His words draws all hearts after Him. In another place Ganymede and the Rape of Proserpine symbolize premature death. Starting from the same idea, the Saturnian age found its scriptural approximation in Eden, Deucalion in Noah, Eurydice in Lot, the travels of Æneas in those of Moses, Cecrops in Abel, Ajax in Jacob, Troy in Egypt.' Nor did the ingenuity of Christian teachers stop here. As if they prided themselves on the transmutation to their own purposes of unlikely or obstinate materials, they subjected even 'Ovid's Metamorphoses,' to a metamorphosis as great as any of them, and interpreted the legends of Pliny and equally veracious stories from other sources to purposes of Christian edification. Moreover the moralities dramatized within the Church took also the didactic form of collections of legends. Of these moral stories the popular collection in the fourteenth century was the *Gesta Romanorum*, in which heathen legends of every degree of questionable truth and morality are carefully allegorized in order to subserve the interests of the Church. No doubt these moralities, whether representations or didactic stories, operated indirectly in a manner different from that in which the Church intended to apply them. If they served the interests of dogmatic belief by presenting in a vivid form the teachings of the clergy, they also diffused among the people some rudiments of Classical Literature, and thus helped to prepare the way for its revival during the Renaissance.

The stage of culture in the mediæval Church which I have thus glanced at, and which is marked by mysteries, allegorical shows, and moralities, is perfectly inexplicable on general grounds apart from

[1] See some extravagances of allegorical exegesis in the middle ages collected by Mr. Mullinger in his *Schools of Charles the Great*, pp. 90, 186.

[2] *Storia*, etc., p. 85.

the circumstances of the case: I mean the state of general knowledge among the poorer classes, the fewness of their opportunities for increasing it. Every historical religion has in its very nature and origin dramatic elements. Every human life, every actual event may be made to assume, in its relation or commemoration, a representative character; though a strong tendency to histrionic display as part of religious worship will invariably be accompanied by a diminished appreciation of the ethical and spiritual elements in a given religion. The ordinary, and especially the Eucharistic, services of all Christian churches have necessarily much in them that is symbolical and dramatic. The Mass has been termed 'the Great Drama of Christendom,' and there is no doubt that in the relation and sequence of its different parts we have all the main features of a dramatic performance. We cannot therefore wonder that, in the mediæval Church, it was found expedient to resort often to representation rather than narration, and to attract by scenic display worshippers who in general culture were not far above the level of children.

The exact line between the 'mysteries' and 'moralities,' on the one hand, and miracle-plays on the other, is difficult to draw; it may even be doubted whether in the middle ages any great distinction existed between them. One probable difference may perhaps have been that the plays had more of the dramatic element in their construction, and were generally, though not exclusively, drawn from sacred sources. Of course with the advance of the histrionic art the moral of the story or representation became more and more interwoven into the structure of the piece, and was evolved by the action of the performers, or the *denoument* of the plot, so that a separate enunciation of its didactic purpose became needless. Thus the transition of the Morality to the more developed form of the Miracle-play was like the transformation in the office of the Greek Chorus when it gradually lost its explanatory function, and became nothing more than a half-religious comment upon the transactions and characters of the drama. Moreover the miracle play, like the mystery, was often a *tableau vivant*, though with a more elaborate dialogue, of some of the sacred scenes connected with the life of Christ, or of the Apostles and saints of the Church, such as you may see on the festivals of the Church at Naples and most other Italian towns at the present day.[1] They were both written and

[1] The 'Mystery of the Nativity'—the ancestor of the Feast of 'Gesu Bambino' with its '*presepe*' and other accessories so delightful to the children of South Italy in the present day, goes far back to mediæval times, probably to the sixth century.

played by the clergy; though they frequently treated of profane subjects, and that too after a manner neither Christian nor edifying.

What is remarkable in the development of these plays, and what we have to note for our purpose, is their participation in the Free-thought which marks other departments of intellectual activity in the eleventh and two following centuries. The secularization of the old religious drama is indeed a process pretty distinctly marked. First we observe, interwoven into the sacred representation, a certain admixture of Pagan elements, and we find a growing increase of allusions to heathen characters, divinities and events. In a miracle play, *e.g.* of the twelfth century, we have songs in celebration of Venus and of Love. Representations of a half-clerical half-secular character began to be observed, in which the burlesque element preponderated to such an extent as almost to render them caricatures of religious ceremonies. Such are, *e.g.* the election and celebration of Boy Bishops, the Feast of Apes,[1] the Feast of Fools. The dialogue also becomes more elaborate and free, the dramatic action assumes additional complexity. Laymen begin to take part as characters in the sacred dramas, probably also in their composition. And—a still more significant token of transition—the language of the old mysteries was being changed. At as early a date as the eleventh (perhaps the tenth) century[2] we have a mystery, that of the wise and foolish virgins, in which Latin, Provençal and French are simultaneously used.[3] It is obvious that the Theatre like other forms of culture was now gradually separating itself from the Church, it was starting on the course of freedom and independence which of right pertains to it.[4] Accordingly we find, as the next step in the transition, mysteries and nominally sacred dramas represented outside the church. The employment of profane languages such as French or Italian also continues to increase. In the twelfth century we have a mystery on the Resurrection which is entirely in French; and another *El mistero*

[1] On this mystery, comp. Hone's *Ancient Mysteries*, p. 161 and Du Cange, *Gloss.*, art. *Kalendæ*. The rubrical directions for its conclusion were that the priest instead of the usual 'Ite missa est.' should *bray thrice*, and the people instead of 'Deo Gratias' should thrice answer Huiham, Huiham, Huiham. See Bartoli, *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 182, N. 4: Hone, loc. cit., p. 165.

[2] Comp. Wright's *Early Mysteries*, Pref. p. xiii.

[3] For this mystery see Wright's *Early Mysteries*, p. 55, and comp. Viollet le Duc, *Ancien Théatre Français*, Intro. p. vii.; Prof. Bartoli, *Storia*, etc., p. 228, and *I Primi due Secoli*, p. 175, note 4.

[4] The Church began to forbid the participation of the clergy both in the representations in churches, and in the mummings at festivals as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. See some interesting remarks on this point in Wright's *Early Mysteries*, Pref. p. 12.

de los Reyes Magos in Castilian. These were probably performed outside churches. Certainly in the next century, 1244, we have indisputable evidence of a mystery in a highly developed form, having for its subject the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, being performed in a meadow near Padua. We need not follow the course of dramatic development any further, inasmuch as in the following centuries we have abundant examples of a purely secular drama. Farces, moralities, burlesques were both written and acted by laymen. Guilds and companies of players, sometimes clerical sometimes lay, were now organized. These contributed much to the artistic development of the drama, as well as to its enfranchisement from ecclesiastical domination. Some surprise has been evinced at the scarcity of examples of the secular drama before the fourteenth century, contrasted with their abundance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But the truth is, as M. Viollet le Duc has remarked,[1] they probably existed but are now lost. Even the large number of Dramatic pieces belonging to the fifteenth and succeeding centuries—now diligently collected and forming of themselves no inconsiderabe literature—are evidently less than a tithe of those then extant.

The effect of these various dramatic representations in expressing and popularizing Free-thought during the century preceding the Renaissance is undeniable. Even while the Theatre was an appanage of the Church, when the mysteries, moralities and miracle plays were both written and performed by the clergy, when their representation formed part of the most sacred offices of the Church, there was no small amount of freedom both of speech and thought in the performances. Venerated saints, angels and martyrs, nay, even Deity Himself, were addressed in terms of familiarity bordering on irreverence. Naturally with the further development of the drama and the combined influences of Free-thought operating in other directions, this freedom became still more marked, and in some cases assumes a repulsive aspect. The removal of the miracle-plays outside the church walls, the increased part taken by laymen in their composition and representation, served to intensify these tendencies until at the latter part of the Renaissance, and during the Protestant Reformation, the Theatre becomes almost the chief medium for the popular expression of Free-thought, and of determined hostility against the Romish Church.

This influence it was enabled to achieve not only by its general free tone in discussing doctrines and persons commonly reputed sacred, but also by the educational and thought-provoking effect of

[1] *Ancien Théatre Français*, Intro. p. xii.

its dialogue. For the rude populace this subserved the same purpose as the scholastic contests of the Schools and Universities did for mediæval students. It was a kind of popular dialectic or eristic much appreciated by the crowd. A stage controversy *e.g.* between God and Satan, between Vice and Virtue, between soul and body and similar antagonistic entities was certain to evoke both interest and excitement;[1] the preponderance of reason and argument on one side or the other was determined with much shrewdness; and the victor and vanquished were awarded their meed of applause or disdain without reserve or partiality. The extent of controversial reasoning in the Reformation drama renders indeed many of its best products slow and monotonous, the evolution of the plot and development of the characters being frequently sacrificed to argumentative victory. Mr. Paley has remarked on the disproportionate amount of ratiocination which marks the speeches, soliloquies, etc. of the chief personages in a Greek drama, and accounts for the fact by the fondness of the Greek for reasoned discourse and dialectical combats. What was true of the Greek drama, as a national product, is true of the Reformation drama, as an outcome of new mental fermentation and spiritual life. Indeed we have this controversial literature in separate poems, Dialogues, and other productions of the kind unconnected with the Theatre.[2] The effect of this twofold mode of Truth-presentation is clear. Questions for discussion were assumed to be decided on their merits, after impartial estimate of conflicting sides, and with no regard to extraneous authority. The paramount importance of reason was thus conceded. Such a principle was distinctly opposed to authoritative teaching, and to an *ab-extra* dictation, whether ecclesiastical or political. At first the dogmas of the Church were probably regarded as indisputable and beyond the scope of discussion, but this exemption we know was far from being conceded at the Renaissance. Nor were the doctrines set forth by Romanism so inherently pure, nor the characters of those who taught them so immaculate, as to justify such an exemption. Accordingly we find a free criticism of most of the dogmas of the Romish Church, especially when their direct object was to increase the wealth of the clergy. It would be easy to adduce many examples of this Free-thought of the Theatre. The ambition and greed of the Pope, and the immorality of the clergy, were of course favourite objects of stage invective. But the more speculative doctrines of Christianity were not always spared. Thus the fall of man, the doctrine of Special

[1] Professor Bartoli well remarks that this form of literature is common throughout the middle ages. See his note, *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 173.

[2] Comp. *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, passim.

Providence and its application to answer to prayer. The ordinary theory of Divine Justice, the belief in Hell and Purgatory, were canvassed with unreserve, and sometimes with bitter scorn and mockery. Instances of this spirit will meet us when we come to consider Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*. At present I will only quote one instance of free-enquiry opposing itself to the convictions of theologians. This is how Judas Iscariot *e.g.* reproaches God in an old Breton mystery: 'Why has God created me to be damned on His account? It is the law of the world that good and evil must dominate, according to their principle and essence, every created thing. Hence I cannot be permanently righteous in whatever state I am, if I am made of evil matter. God is then unrighteous. To us He is neither impartial, nor a true judge. Far from that, He is perfidious and cruel, in having made me of a matter destined to cause my fall, and to prevent my reconciliation with Him.'[1] Whatever may be thought of the conclusions enunciated in this and numberless similar passages found in the Drama of the Renaissance and the Reformation, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that it is reasoning, the outcome of a critical and independent spirit brought to bear on theological subjects, an assertion of the right of Skepticism, in opposition to Dogma.

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

V. Revival of Classical Studies.

But we have yet to consider a greater co-efficient in the Secularization of Literature than any of those already touched upon. I mean the gradual revival of Classical Literature itself. No idea relating to the middle ages is more common than that which assumes the utter extinction of Pagandom from about A.D. 500 until its revival at the Renaissance. The conception is perhaps favoured by the names given to the great movement that took place in Italy between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such terms as 'revival,' 'Renaissance,' etc., are understood as if they implied a resurrection from death.

[1] Comp. Littré, *Études sur les Barbares et le Moyen Age*, p. 357, etc. Similar free-thinking ratiocination occurs also in the Old Cornish miracle plays, *e.g.* in the play of 'St. Meviasek, Apostle of Cambourne,' we find the following criticism of the doctrine of the Atonement:—

> 'If God above was his father, I say, Meviasek,
> He could through His grace have saved rich and poor
> Without being dead. Of thy assertion shame is!
> What need was there for God's son to be slain like a hart?'

This is at least a great exaggeration. The epoch no doubt is a revival, but rather from debility and helplessness than from absolute lifelessness. There is really no period of Mediæval History in which traces of Pagan culture are not discernible. When, by the establishment of Christianity as the State Religion of the Roman Empire, Paganism was driven out of the towns, it found an appropriate shelter in the Pagi or country villages. Here relics of the older Pagan cultus remained until late in the fourth century; nay, even in the fifth, Venus was worshipped in the sacred groves of Campania,[1] while the festivals of Saturn, Pan, and other mythological divinities continued to be observed under slightly altered names which disguised but faintly their real origin. What is thus true of religious tradition and social usages is also to a less extent true of Latin Literature. This was a Testament of Antiquity of which Italy was the natural residuary legatee, but partly on account of the hostility of the Church, partly by means of political troubles and the disorganization thence arising, it was a legacy of which for some centuries she was not permitted to avail herself. No doubt there was throughout the middle ages a party in the Church which always regarded with furtive approbation the writings of Pagan Antiquity, but unfortunately it was by no means the dominant party. The leaders of Latin Christianity, with unimportant exceptions, were enlisted on the side of intellectual obscurantism. An ancient Council, the Fourth of Carthage, forbad Bishops to read Pagan authors; and Tertullian, Augustin and Jerome found worthy successors in the great leaders of monasticism, as Cascian and Benedict, and in such Popes as Gregory I. and Paul III., the former of whom prohibited the use of all heathen authors, while the latter stigmatized humanists as heretics. The general spirit of ecclesiastical tradition was thus opposed to Pagan culture; and this prejudice was not greatly modified by the isolated teaching of such men as Boethius and Cassiodorus, who occupy a position midway between heathen and Christian erudition. Besides, the direction which the dogmatic development of the Church had unfortunately taken was such as to necessitate a vehement opposition to Pagan culture. The reliance on speculative truths and subtle metaphysical distinctions was naturally opposed to the enlarged view, the stress on ratiocination, the robust common sense, which marks the best products of Greek and Roman Literature. The insistence on orthodoxy, as an exclusive prerogative of the Church, vitiated all other conceivable or possible sources of Truth. The accredited dogma which was assumed to be supernaturally infallible, and was therefore

[1] Comp. Bartoli, *Storia*, p. 83.

promulgated with a dictatorial authority which forbad not only criticism but even hesitancy of belief, could not take account of alien sources of enlightenment, nor even acknowledge their existence. To this exclusiveness, which is after all the normal product of Sacerdotalism, must be added the Asceticism which forbad all relaxation and enjoyment, and stigmatized even intellectual pleasure as a deadly sin. No doubt the instincts of the Church, regarded from her own selfish and ambitious standpoint, were well adapted to subserve her interests. Enlightenment of whatever kind is the enemy of priestcraft and superstition, and the spirit of heathen literature though far from being opposed to the Teaching of Christ, nay having much in common with that teaching, was certainly antipathetic to the evolution of mediæval Romanism.

But though the Church discountenanced and prohibited heathen learning, though it threw away, as an accursed thing, the thought, science, poetry, and literature of the great Power to whose position and prerogatives she had succeeded, she still retained the language of old Rome. The pupils educated in her schools in the arid grammatical studies which formed the staple ingredient of monastic culture were at least endowed with the power of reading Virgil and Cicero. Even from the fifth to the eighth century—the dark ages of Italy—the use of the Latin tongue formed an element of continuity—a tie with the religion of the present and the literature of the past, which was not materially affected even by the invasions of the Lombards. After these barbarians had established themselves throughout Italy, Latin, though debased and corrupt, continued to be the literary language. Laws were enacted, studied and enforced in Latin. All business transactions were conducted in Latin.[1] Sermons were preached and liturgies read in Latin. Mysteries and miracle plays were celebrated in Latin. There was thus enough popular currency in the language to enable a studious layman, as well as the priest or monk who could command a Latin manuscript, to form some acquaintance with ancient literature.

No doubt Italy was, at the time I am speaking of, far behind the level of France, Spain and England in the cultivation of classical and secular learning. She suffered the penalty of having in her midst the ancient capital of the Western Empire. To cross the Alps, ravage the plains of North Italy, and sack Rome had become the favourite traditional policy of every powerful horde of Northern barbarians. Italy had no schools so celebrated as that of York,[2] nor so

[1] Muratori, *Aut. Ital. Diss.*, 43. Comp. Bartoli, *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 26.

[2] Cf. Alcuin's well-known poetical List of Classical Authors in the Library

free and enlightened as those of Ireland,[1] nor so numerous and well conducted as the monastic schools of Gaul. The smaller schools attached to parochial churches, of which we read in the sixth century,[2] were no doubt put an end to by the Lombard Invasions. They shared the fate of the libraries burnt, churches violated and despoiled, and convents sacked which marked the track of the barbarians. Passing over the few and unimportant scintillations of Intellectual Light with which Tiraboschi and others endeavour to relieve this sombre period of Italian History, we may say that it is impossible to assign any movement of classical learning which affects, though only indirectly, the Italian Renaissance before the educational Reform of Charlemagne in the ninth century. Even this episode—the most brilliant in the history of mediæval Literature—had only a temporary existence in France, and was much more short-lived in Italy. The leading spirits of the movement also, Alcuin and Rabanus Maurus, only professed to teach those sciences of antiquity which most directly subserved the interests of the Church. The former indeed forbad a disciple to teach his pupils the reading of heathen authors.[3] The latter, though more liberal, adhered too closely to traditional methods and conceptions to permit his influence to be described as really enlightening. Besides which, the education imparted in even the best of the monastic schools was of a wretchedly narrow-minded description. Not even its warmest advocates would contend that it possessed any truly cultural significance. Intended primarily to mould the monastic intellect, its chief aim was to impart that semblance of instruction which while it satisfied was unable to nourish or promote the mental growth of its recipients. Instead of bidding the eager mind to march forward it assuaged its restlessness by adroitly contrived schemes of 'marking time.' There was, in other words, motion, but no progression. But whatever results this effort of Charlemagne had in Italy they were of a temporary character. The inroads of foreigners, after the final collapse of Charlemagne's power,

of York, and see Mullinger's *Schools of Charlemagne*, p. 60, and Heeren, *Gesch. d. class. Litteratur im Mittelalter*, Werke, iv. p. 132.

[1] Comp. Hauréau, *Singularités Historiques et Littéraires*, Essay I. 'Écoles d'Irlande, pp. 1–36.

[2] Tiraboschi, *Storia*, vol. iii. p. 47.

[3] 'De peur,' says Guiguené 'que cette lecture ne leur corrompit le cœur,' *Hist. Litt. d'Italie*, i. p. 94. The best recent account of Alcuin and the curious admixture of monkish and literary elements in his character is that given by Mr. Mullinger, *Schools of Charlemagne*, chap. ii. To the credit side of Alcuin's intellectual formation must be placed the Rationalism which refused to see in the Witch of Endor's apparition of Samuel anything more than the subjective illusion of Saul.

still desolated Italy. In the North, the Hungarians, in the South the Saracens and Normans carried fire and sword through her towns and villages, though the latter also conveyed a germ of future Free-thought by the introduction of Arab culture and Provençal Poetry. Previous to the year 1000 there was, besides, another potent cause which retarded, or rather quenched for the time, the advance of classical culture: I mean the general perturbation as to the end of all things being at hand. The general terror worked by this anticipation operated now, as on former occasions in the history of Christianity, viz. in stifling all human interests, in paralysing all mental effort, and subjecting man as a bondslave to the cupidity and tyranny of the Church. Thus in the Literary history of Italy there occurs another dark patch, in the early part of the tenth century, hardly less intense than the dark ages of the fifth to the eighth century. But even at this period, and notwithstanding the depressed state of classical learning, we possess a few records to show that it was not extinct. Here and there amid the political troubles, the degrading superstition, the profound ignorance, might be found a solitary student who basked, as we before a coal fire, in the sunlight of other days. Here and there were found monastic libraries which contained, besides ecclesiastical treatises, some of the best authors of Heathen antiquity;[1] though the latter are as yet in a considerable minority.

In the eleventh century classical culture begins to be merged with the other literary confluents which combine to make up the general stream of the Renaissance. The fermentation now at work, Political, Religious, Social, Literary, is of too varied and complex a character to admit accurate definition. The Italian communes were beginning to combine and to assert their new-born political energy. Commerce and the Crusades were exerting the stimulation we have already ascribed to them. Schools and Universities come into existence. Arab Free-thought and Culture are being disseminated; and with other secular influences, stimulating and being stimulated by them, there is a decided quickening of men's interests in the products of Heathen Antiquity, an evident wish to understand and *appropriate* the thoughts of Ancient Philosophical systems. Foremost among classical authors who now arrested attention as thinkers, was Aristotle, some of whose works, Latin translations from the Arabic, began to be known and discussed both in France and Italy. At the

[1] See *e.g.* the Library Catalogue of the Monastery of Bobbio given by Muratori, *Ant. Ital.*, iii. pp. 818–825. Comp. Heeren. Op. cit. p. 193 note, and see Tiraboschi, *Storia*, iii. pp. 276–282.

commencement of the century a certain Vilgard,[1] master of the school at Ravenna, had the temerity to assert that all the dicta of the ancient Poets were true, and were to be accepted as articles of Faith, in preference to Christian mysteries. While at its termination we meet in Florence a sect of Epicureans who a few years later attained such power as to cause political troubles. Moreover, the Ghibellines, the leaders of the Italian communes, and in general the determined asserters of secular as opposed to Papal power, were frequently represented as materialists and irreligious; and though the imputation was hardly true of the majority, there was undoubtedly a large minority of whom it held good. Into the general excitation, of which these are a few examples, Italy entered with alacrity. In times past it had always been celebrated for Free-thought, when Free-thought was possible. Among the adherents to the Arian and Pelagian heresies in the fourth century not a few were Italians.[2] It would seem that proximity to Rome, in mediæval as in modern times, produced a disillusionising effect. The Italians, says Professor Bartoli,[3] were averse to Theological studies. All the great names of Italian Theology, Lanfranc, Anselm, Peter Lombard, Bonaventura, Thomas Aquinas, made their mark and obtained their celebrity in foreign countries and universities. The chief studies in vogue in the Italian Universities of the twelfth and thirteenth century are Roman Law and Philosophy.

Having thus brought down the stream of classical learning to the commencement of the Renaissance, when Dante and Petrarca meet us, I will next glance at another and final concurrent cause of Italian Free-thought:—

THE SECULARIZATION OF LITERATURE.

VI. Arab Culture and Philosophy.

Into the earliest relations of Islamism and Christianity we need not enter. I have already noticed their mutual position as distinct dogmatic systems, and the antagonism this was calculated to pro-

[1] Renan, *Averroes*, p. 284.

[2] Tiraboschi, *Storia*, vol. iii. p. 48.

[3] Cf. Bartoli, *I Primi due Secoli*, p. 201, who quotes Giesebrecht, 'Sacræ disciplinæ per omnia hæc tempora, indoli atque ingenio nationis parum convenerunt, exiguoque fructu sunt cultæ' (pp. 24-25); in another passage where the same author compares Italians with Germans he says, 'Hi armis, forensibus pergaudent negotiis; illi (Germans) summa cum animi delectatione in rebus sacris, in martyrum meritis, in fide christiana propagata commorantur' (pag. 23).

voke. But whatever may be said of the bigotry displayed by Islamism in its earlier history, and occasionally afterwards, it is certain that Mahomet himself with all his prophetic enthusiasm, was a tolerant man.[1] Undoubtedly he was so to Judaism and Christianity. There were indeed too many elements common to the three Semitic religions to permit a logical standpoint of antagonism for the youngest against the two elder. The most honoured names both in Judaism and Christianity were sacred to the Arabian prophet. There were also similarities of religious thought, opinion and sympathies—the common substratum of Semiticism—which he not only recognized, but of which he shrewdly availed himself in controversy with Jews and Christians. No doubt there are passages in the Koran which manifest an intense hatred of unbelievers; but by these are intended idolaters and Polytheists, not varying phases of Monotheism. Hence, setting aside exceptions of cruelty and fanaticism, unhappily common to all dogmatic faiths, we have in the leaders of Mahometanism, as in the Prophet himself, examples of men who are eminent for enlightenment, liberality and toleration; and the history of Islamism, taken as a whole, must be regarded as a powerful propaganda of Free-thought and liberal culture, which is all the more striking when contrasted with the barbarism by which it was surrounded.

The reason of the superiority of the Arab over other Semitic races as a pioneer of enlightenment, science, and toleration seems to be their greater intellectual mobility, and their keener receptivity. These qualities enabled the Mahometan leaders to value and appropriate whatever learning, thought or science they found existing among the races whom they conquered,[2] while the same attributes enabled them to modify whatever articles in their own belief they discovered to be repugnant to the intellectual advance, the mental freedom, or real welfare of humanity.[3] Possessed of these qualities we need not feel surprised at the consequences of Arab thought coming into contact with the remnants of Greek criticism that survived in Syria, and at Alexandria, in the eighth century. Ancient philosophy, discarded by Christianity, and despised by the barbarism spreading over the South of Europe, seemed to find at once a new home at Damascus and Alexandria, whence it was again to blaze forth and enlighten the countries of its birth. The Khalifs of Damascus first set the example of literary activity. They employed teachers, Christians many of them, to disclose some of the wondrous treasures of Greek wisdom. Aided by munificent and enlightened patronage these men began translating

[1] Comp. Sedillot, *Hist. Gen. des Arabes*, i. p. 84.
[2] Comp. Humboldt, *Cosmos* (Bohn), vol. ii. p. 583.
[3] Comp. Sedillot, op. cit. pp. 196, 403 and passim.

the works of the chief Greek thinkers into Arabic. Commencing with the mathematicians and astronomers, they next proceeded to the philosophers. These translations were sometimes made from Syriac as well as from Greek; and were not very correct representations of the originals; but they served the purpose of quickening the tastes of the Arabs for mathematics and literary culture, and inciting them to a closer acquaintance with an erudition in many respects differing greatly from their own Semitic ideas. Precisely the same movement was taking place at Alexandria, where we have the commencement of the literary impulse which subsequently culminated at Bagdad.[1] Thus, while the leaders of Christianity were occupied in trivial and endless disputes, while they were painfully elaborating new heresies out of subtle and impalpable distinctions, while they anathematized and devoted to endless torture all non-Christians, especially the followers of the great Arabian heresiarch, the Khalifs of Damascus took Christians into their councils, employed them in their schools and sat at their feet as teachers of Science and Philosophy. Even more remarkable, if possible, is the enlightenment, toleration, the cultivation of arts, science and literature which distinguished the Khalifate of Bagdad under the Abassides. 'The passion,' says M. Sedillot,[2] speaking of this Khalifate, 'with which the Arabs surrendered themselves to literary studies excels even that manifested by Europe at the Renaissance.' The best works in the Greek language, brought from Constantinople, were immediately translated. A school of interpreters was opened at Bagdad under the direction of a Nestorian doctor. A revenue of 15,000 dinars was devoted to a college in which 6,000 pupils of every rank received gratuitous instruction. Libraries were founded open to all the world; and these were increased from time to time by princes, some of whom even took part in the public lectures of the professors. Mathematical learning attained a height never before known. Astronomy was enriched by important discoveries. Observatories were built and furnished with instruments the greatness of which appals the imagination. There were hospitals for the instruction of doctors, laboratories for chemical experiments, etc. And all this brilliancy of literary and scientific attainment, in the far East, is contemporary with Charlemagne, in other words when the whole of Christian Europe was submerged in a barbarism very insufficiently tempered by the Educational Reform which he initiated. No wonder that historians find the comparison of Charlemagne and Haroun al Raschid well adapted to illustrate the difference between the civilizations of the East and the West in the

[1] Sedillot, op. cit., i. p. 184.
[2] Op. cit., i. p. 239.

ninth century.[1] The material products of the Arabs of Bagdad were not less wonderful than their intellectual activity; and with these Italy early made acquaintance, as we have seen, by her commercial intercourse with Constantinople and the seaports of the Levant. Thus into the ports of Pisa and Genoa together with the bales of Eastern carpets, the spices and perfumes, the aromatic woods and other precious products of Bagdad, perhaps some mechanical rarity like the clock which Haroun al Raschid sent to Charlemagne, came the reports of the wondrous erudition, the novel sciences, the toleration, the general enlightenment which distinguished this marvellous creation of the followers of the Arabian prophet.

But it is to the Arab civilization in Spain that we must look for those influences of free-culture that directly affected the Italian Renaissance. For the space of three centuries (from the beginning of the eighth to that of the eleventh) the Peninsula was governed by tolerant and enlightened princes, who protected and advanced with all their power every branch of human knowledge.[2] Here also we meet with the same erudite industry, the same passionate zeal for letters and science, the same freedom and tolerance as characterized the Abassides of Bagdad. In the Spanish schools were taught Astronomy, Geography, Dialectic, Medicine, Grammar, as well as the elements of Physics, Chemistry, and Natural History. Libraries were established in every large town, which were well filled with copies of Ancient Greek Authors and Alexandrian Philosophers. Mathematical Sciences—Algebra and Geometry—were cultivated with success. These branches of learning found their way by means of itinerant scholars into neighbouring countries. One of the earliest and most remarkable names which thus serves as a bond of connection between Arab culture and Latin Christianity is the famous Gerbert who afterwards became Pope under the name of Silvester II.[3] He had studied under Arab teachers at Barcelona and Cordova. After his elevation to the Papacy he was accused of practising the black art. The comparative measure of enlightenment between Spain and Rome may be estimated by the circumstance that what in Spain

[1] *E.g.* Heeren, in his *Folgen der Kreuzzüge für Europa*, Werke, ii. p. 71.

[2] Comp. Sedillot, op. cit., i. pp. 317–343, and Sismondi, *De la Litt. du Midi*, etc., chap. iii.

[3] On this remarkable man—probably the most learned that ever sat on the Papal throne—See *Histoire Litteraire*, vol. vi., Hauréau's Article in the *Nouvelle Biog. Generale*, and compare Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 418. On the legends with which Roman fanaticism has invested his character see Bartoli, *Storia*, etc., p. 112, etc. Gregorovius in his *Roman History* (iii. 617) justly remarks that Gerbert 'shone in Rome like a solitary torch in a dark night.'

was wisdom, learning and science, became in the capital of Christendom magic, necromancy, and dealings with the Evil one.[1]

To these more solid intellectual pursuits of the Spanish Arabs must be added their devotion to music, dancing, the composing and singing of songs, in a word, the gayer and more refining elements in their civilization, which the Provençal and chivalresque poetry afterwards disseminated throughout Italy and Europe. The arts in which they manifest the least excellence are those of Sculpture and Painting, which were forbidden by the Koran; though even in these their ingenious evasions of their founder's prohibitions are sufficient to indicate the ability they would have attained if their genius had been allowed free scope. Their power in this direction is further attested by their taste and skill in architecture and decorative painting, the remains of which still excite the wonder and despair of Europe. The general result of this culture and science on the intellectual development of modern Europe is a subject we need not enter upon. It has been so often and so ably treated that little is left to be added.[2] Even the barest summary of inventions, discoveries, and improvements effected by the Arabs in Poetry, Music, Astronomy, Chemistry, Architecture, Medicine, the Mechanical Arts, Natural History, Botany, etc., would occupy far too much time for our present purpose. They form a striking and lasting tribute to the beneficent effects of free-culture and unimpeded enquiry. They also justify the employment of Rationalism, as against a slavish Bibliolatry. The literal observance of the text of the Koran would have made the civilization of Damascus, Bagdad and Cordova sheer impossibilities. Nor were these learned pursuits and refined amusements of the Spanish Arabs restricted to any one class. 'The taste for intellectual pleasures,' says Sedillot,[3] 'penetrated every stage of Society.' Nor again were Mussulmans regarded with more favour than Christians. The most complete toleration existed for every mode of religious belief; while the highest offices in the State were open to men of every class without the least distinction. The Christians of Spain early appreciated the liberty which their own co-religionaries, when they had power to refuse it, thought it a

[1] The mediæval legend of Theophilus—one of the many precursors of the Faust-Legend—is derived from this enlightened pope. And comp. Scheible's *Kloster*, ii. pp. 155–177. Gerbert like his brother Black Artist is said to have been accompanied by a familiar in the form of a large black dog. Comp. chapter on Agrippa, *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. II., p. 471.

[2] Comp. *e.g.* Whewell's *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, vol. i.; Humboldt's *Cosmos*, vol. ii. (Bohn's Trans.); Draper's *Intellectual Development*, etc.

[3] Op. cit. i. 342.

heinous crime to extend to the accursed followers of Mahomet. They soon learnt the Arabic language; and the employment of this tongue became so general that a Christian Bishop, the celebrated John of Seville, translated the Bible into it for their use.[1] So also the Canons of the Church in Spain were written in Arabic.[2] In the ninth and tenth centuries, both the Spanish—*i.e.* the Romance stage of it—and the Arabic seem to have been spoken indifferently by the people; so that Arab learning was imparted without even the necessity of knowing the Arabic language. Hardly less than the intellectual was the commercial activity of the Moors and Arabs. Their products and manufactures were known and valued throughout Europe, in the Levant, and on the coasts of Africa. Toledo was famous for its blades, Granada for its silks, Cordova for its harness and saddles, Cuença for its woollens—the blue and green cloths which were known throughout Europe—and Valentia for its sugar and spices, not to mention the more general products of the country. Most of this commerce was in the hands of Jews and Moors who had their agents at the seaports of Italy, Africa, and the Levant, while traders on foot found their way across the Pyrenees to the South of France and the Plains of Lombardy. To this commercial intercourse must be attributed, I think, the extent to which Arab ideas and civilization became known in Italy. Notwithstanding sacerdotal exclusiveness, Bulls of Popes, and other embargoes of a similar kind, the Italian merchant could hardly help contrasting the superiority of the wares which came from Spain with those which his own country was capable of producing. He might have extended the contrast to the well-known probity of the Moorish compared, with the laxity of the Christian trader, who could always obtain absolution for commercial turpitude by means of the very gains he had thereby acquired; or he might have compared, with like feelings of envy, the internal peace and prosperity enjoyed by the subjects of the Khalifs of Cordova with the perpetual strife occasioned by the ambition of the Popes of Rome. But besides the Free-thought thus furtively imported with commercial bales, bottles and parcels into Italy, there was a more direct traffic of the same forbidden commodity, both by the songs of the Provençals, which I have already considered, and by the return of youths who had resorted to the Spanish universities to complete their education. For, in common with France and England, Italy also sent some of her sons to Seville, Cordova, Barcelona in order to acquire the Philosophy and Science which were then obtain-

[1] Comp. Dr. Leclerc, *Hist de la Médicine Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 366, and for a List of John of Seville's Translations, etc., see the same work, p. 370, etc.

[2] Sismondi, *Litter. du Midi*, chap. iii.

able in no other University towns in Europe.[1] These on their return reported the marvellous civilization, the mental freedom, the noble tolerance, which not even the rancour stirred in men's minds by the first Crusades could affect [2]—the general order, peace and prosperity of the 'felon Paynims.' In all probability there was an importation of some of the numerous translations which the professors at Cordova and elsewhere made from Greek Philosophers and Mathematicians, as well as their own original contributions to these and cognate subjects. Thus was Italy preparing herself, by a foretaste of Mahometan Free-thought and tolerance, for that manifestation of it which she was about to offer to Europe in her own Renaissance. The intercourse I am now considering, between the Islamism of Spain and the Romanism of Italy, has moreover another and a more portentous aspect. It seems clear that it resulted occasionally in the conversion of Christians to Mahometans. Such a process, suggested by the comparative civilizations of the two countries, and facilitated by the lax interpretation of the Koran which is a distinguishing feature of all the higher stages of Mussulman culture, would have been both natural and pardonable. Indeed the apostasy which preferred the vicegerent of Mahomet to that of Christ might well be regarded as no true apostasy at all, but a transference of allegiance from a corrupt and perverted Christianity to a faith and conduct nearer its own primal spirit. The legends and mystery-plays of the middle ages are not unfrequently based upon the crime of apostasy—generally to Mahometanism. These mostly take the form of a man selling himself to the devil by denying Jesus Christ, and being afterwards rescued from the consequences of his compact by the intercession of the Virgin.[3] Such legends did not want historical instances on which to establish themselves. Whenever a mediæval thinker seemed indoctrinated with a love of knowledge and mental freedom, the rare phenomenon was immediately ascribed to diabolical agency, and a secret conversion to Islamism. Legends of this kind surround the memory of the great Gerbert (Pope Silvester II.); and no accusation was more common in the mouth of his clerical calumniators than that Frederick Barbarossa had abjured Christianity and embraced the

[1] Sismondi, loc. cit.

[2] 'Alors que les Croisés entraient dans Jerusalem, les portes de Tolède récemment conquise, s'ouvraient à Gérard de Crémone et à toute une légion de savants qui s'en allaient demander à l'étranger les moyens d'étude qu'ils ne pouvaient trouver dans leur patrie.'—Dr. Leclerc, *Hist. de la Med. Arabe*, i. p. 581.

[3] This is the subject of the mediæval legend or miracle play of Theophilus, which goes back so far as the sixth century. Comp. its treatment by Rutebœuf, *Le Miracle de Theophile*, Œuv. Comp., Ed. Jubinal, ii. p. 79.

faith of Mahomet. These accusations of impiety received a new impulse in Italy from the propagation of that phase of Arab Philosophy which more than any other contributed to the growth of Italian Free-thought—I mean Averroism.

Without entering at all minutely into the heterogeneous mass of doctrine with which the name of Averroes is identified, we may say, briefly, that its chief phases are derived from the Idealism of the Alexandrian School, grafted upon a half real, half supposititious foundation of Aristotle. This at once supplies us with the reasons of its popularity among the thinkers of the Renaissance, as well as of its gradual decadence in proportion to the decline of scholasticism. Its doctrines were associated with the name which of all ancient thinkers was held most in reverence. The title by which Averroes is known to Dante and Petrarca is 'the great Commentator upon,' it is always implied, 'the greater writer—*The* Philosopher par excellence.' During the eleventh and twelth centuries the reputation of Aristotle had reached its climax before the attention of the Church was drawn to the dangerous consequences of his teaching. The greater part of this period coincides with the literary activity and early fame of Averroes. In the rapid extension of Averroism which followed, this original connection with Aristotle must be taken into account; for it was just this that first established him as a powerful influence among the thinkers of the Renaissance, though the commentator and disciple ultimately superseded the Master. But if Averroes thus owed much of his fame and consideration to the Stagirite, his own thought tendencies were also congenial to the Italian intellect. These were metaphysical and mystical to the very verge of Idealistic negation.[1] Matter, with him as with most other Arab thinkers, is eternal. Indeed in its metaphysical definition, as *materia prima*, it is conceived as identical with Deity. Creation is not an event, but an eternal process. God is the collective designation of all intellectual and spiritual forces. The individual intellect, in its coming forth into activity or, as an Hegelian would phrase it, in its gradual self recognition and assertion, is part of the universal mind. And this, in the case of the wise and good, is their ultimate destiny.[2] In a word, the outcome of Averroism is a peculiarly subtle and intricate Pantheism. No doubt he claimed to be an orthodox Mussulman, but it is quite evident that his scheme of

[1] For an able summary of Averroism, Comp. Munk's *Melanges de Phil. Juive et Arabe*, p. 442 etc., and for a more extended exposition see Renan's *Averroes*, pp. 88–162.

[2] This final self-annihilation of the Individual intellect being accomplished by *Knowledge* assimilates the teaching of Averroes to Buddhism and the doctrine of Nirvana. Cf. Munk, *Melanges*, pp. 448, 450.

Philosophy conflicts with the main Dogmas both of Islam and of Christianity. Like Erigena, he believed that Philosophy and Religion were one.; and he proposed to discover this standpoint in the Koran.[1] He also pleaded the stress of the same authority on Truth as a reason for Free-thought and independent research. He further contrived by an ingenious elaboration of metaphysics to attain to the orthodox dogmas of Islamism, just as Hegel managed to extract certain affinities to the creed of Ecclesiastical Christianity from his Transcendentalism. But in the case of Averroes the attempt was unsuccessful. He was unable to deceive his co-religionaries. Not only was he regarded as a suspected thinker, but as having brought to a climax the Free-thought of Islamism. He was in truth the last of a brilliant succession of thinkers to whom the Khalifate of Cordova had given birth. After Averroes a reaction against Mahometan Free-thought set in, just as the Renaissance was followed by a similar antagonistic movement against the Free-thought of Christianity. Still more polemical was the attitude of Averroes to Christianity. His philosophy found no place for the doctrines of Creation, Providence, Miracles, Revelation, hardly even for Deity, in its ordinarily received acceptation among Christians. Hence, to the Italians of the latter part of the twelfth and the whole of the thirteenth century, who probably for other reasons had become suspicious or impatient of the Dogmas of the Church, Averroism furnished a philosophical standpoint of indifference, or it might be even hostility, to the older creed. It also contributed by its stress on ratiocination, by the wide reach of its method, by its larger conception of the laws of the universe to stimulate intellectual independence and self-possession. Hence Averroism, apart from its characteristic conclusions, undoubtedly aided the cause of Free-thought. We shall find indeed that Pantheism in alliance with Mysticism is a not unfrequent accompaniment of Skepticism, though rather as a goal than a starting point. It need not therefore surprise us to discover so much of the Italian Skepticism of the thirteenth century attributed to Averroistic influences, nor that Leo X. with all his liberal culture, his profound respect for Aristotle, his secret sympathy with Free-thought, should have thought it necessary to issue a Bull against the Averroists. But notwithstanding the suspicion of orthodox Mussulmans and the repressive measures of the Church,[2] Averroism continued to increase in Italy. Tiraboschi remarks on the enormous following the great Arab free-thinker contrived to obtain; and attributes to his works much of the

[1] Comp. Munk, *Melanges de Phil. Juive et Arabe*, p. 453.

[2] Comp. Renan, *Averroes*, pp. 225–255.

impiety and irreligion which marks the Renaissance.[1] In the fifteenth century the 'Great Commentary' had succeeded in thrusting the paternal Text—Aristotle himself—from the seat of honour it had so long occupied,[2] and the chief University of Italy, that of Padua, became, for some century and a half, a school of Averroism.

In concluding this sketch of the varied influences we have classified under the general heading 'Secularization of Literature,' and which aided so powerfully to promote the Italian Renaissance, we must I think award the highest place to Arab culture; especially with all its concomitants of Provençal Poetry, Averroistic Philosophy, and general Free-thought. No doubt in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these influences gave way, in point of importance, to those of Classical Literature and Philosophy. The very subtlety of Averroes, though congenial to the Italian mind, tended, by its excessive tenuity and metaphysical complexity, to induce an opposition in favour of the breadth, directness and simplicity of classicalism.[3] Its association with Aristotle, though at first an advantage, was a decided demerit when Aristotle himself, in common with the Scholasticism of which he had become an integral part, was threatened with subversion. But the essential spirit of Averroism—its Pantheistic Idealism—though under different forms and employing other terminologies, continued to live in succeeding Italian Philosophy. It distinguishes Zarabella, Cremonini, Cesalpinus, Cardan, and other well-known free-thinkers; and we shall have to note its presence in Pomponazzi, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini.

REACTION OF ECCLESIASTICAL DOGMA.

Besides the agencies already enumerated which operated directly in promoting the Renaissance, there remains to be considered a whole class of indirect influences that contributed to the same event. I mean the various Reactionary effects of the dogmatic system of the Church.

Not only is the primary axiom of our subject true, viz.:—that excessive repression of thought induces a rebound, but it is equally certain that, *cæteris paribus*, the violence of the rebound will be in the ratio of that of the repression. Applied to thought, and systems of dogma, this law is the same as that formulated by Sextos Empeirikos,

[1] *Storia*, etc., vol. v. pp. 277, 280.

[2] Renan, *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

[3] All the influences which combined to overthrow Averroism are derived from a more extended knowledge of Greek Antiquity. M. Renan discriminates three varieties of them. 1. Peripatetic Hellenism. 2. Platonism. 3. Humanism. See his *Averroes*, pp. 383-400.

viz. That the Skepticism which assails Dogma will be proportionate, in extent and intensity, to the Dogma assailed. Considered from this point of view, we might say that Romanism was in a great measure the active but unwilling cause of the Italian Renaissance, as it was of the German Reformation.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy features of the doctrinal development of mediæval Christianity was the stupendous growth of its metaphysical doctrines, and the excessive elaboration of Dialectics on which this huge superstructure was based. The simple creed which Jesus Christ taught had become an abstruse and elaborate philosophy, which propounded the most transcendental of abstractions as though they were an important element of everyday existence, which attempted to divide and discriminate between impalpable entities when any but a nominal division was inconceivable; and which in all cases invested the final result of their metaphysical subtlety with the sacred character and imposing name of 'orthodoxy.' The controversies to which this method gave birth, and which filled the mediæval Church with their clamour, are of the kind we might have anticipated from their origin. They are ludicrously trivial and puerile, either in their object or their treatment—not uncommonly in both. They attempt to dogmatize on matters not only beyond the ken, but far beyond the practical interests of humanity. They decide on the nature and attributes of Deity, of Angels and Spirits, and of a future life, with the same undoubting persuasion of their infallibility as the Encyclopædists displayed in secular knowledge. The result of this metaphysical development, at every stage of its growth, was a clear gain for the Church, and an equally undoubted loss of freedom to humanity. The more difficult, self-contradictory, irrational any given dogma, the greater authority its unreserved acceptation assigned to the Church, and the greater the contempt of human reason that acceptation involved. And, regarding the Church as a moral teacher, the more any dogma conflicted with human instincts and ethical convictions, the greater the authority its reception conceded to the Church; and the more abject and submissive became the attitude of the human conscience to its behests. Tertullian's maxim, 'Credo quia impossibile,' represents the ordinary standpoint of mediæval Christianity, both as respects speculation and ethical teaching, and sufficiently attests its slavish character.

Against this incubus of metaphysical dictation—against the transcendentalism of the schools—the men of the Renaissance protested. They did not, for the most part, reason against the super-subtle dogmas to which their consent was demanded. Their forte did not lie in dialectics; and their natural aptitudes were too untheological to let

them care for disquisitions on ecclesiastical matters. But they discerned with an intuitive glance those aspects of an over-strained belief which could have nothing in common with ordinary human interests, or which lent themselves most readily to burlesque and caricature. They appreciated *e.g.* at its full worth the claims of an infallibility in divine things which was so often united to imbecility in secular matters. Difficult dogmas they sometimes treated ironically, as if transparently obvious; or else, admitting their incomprehensibility, they derided them by ludicrous attempts at explanation; or finally they burlesqued them in an openly shameless and profane manner. The *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci is full of these free treatments of theological dogma; to some of which I shall have presently to call your attention. However naturally our feelings of repugnance might be excited by such treatment, we must remember that we have never been bound so helplessly to the car of theological metaphysics as these men had been, and never therefore experienced the uncontrolable revulsion of feeling which attended their self-wrought deliverance. The real craving which was signified in this unruly manner, which underlay this bitter contempt for scholastic metaphysics, was a desire for simplicity, for rationality, for a conception of the world and of Nature as real present actualities, for beliefs and teachings more in accordance with human wants. The need was part of that general yearning for a return to Nature, to life, to humanity, to common sense and common feeling, which permeates and justifies the Renaissance. Not that the humanism of that movement, nor the Protestant Reformation succeeded in extirpating abstruse metaphysics from the region of genuine Christianity—simple devotion to God and duty to man—but they commenced that appreciation of simplicity in religious creeds which has grown in direct proportion with the progress of culture, knowledge, and religious perspicacity down to the present day.

REACTION AGAINST ASCETICISM.

Besides this reaction against scholasticism, and abstruse metaphysics there was another and stronger recoil that opposed itself to mediæval asceticism. The extent to which gloomy and sombre views of human existence, and everything thereunto appertaining, prevailed in the middle ages I need not dwell upon, as it is one of their chief characteristics. Not only was Theology affected by this Pessimistic fanaticism, but it pervaded Social life, Literature, the Fine Arts, and even Architecture. God was regarded as a cruel Tyrant whose wrath was to be deprecated, and favour secured, by self-inflicted torments of every description. Man was the veriest slave of the

Divine caprice, whose whole duty consisted in attaining by the only mode of voluntary macerations, penances and tortures, everlasting beatitude in the world to come. For this world, it was but a gigantic prison house, or an enormous cloistral vestibule of Eternity. As for men and women, they were either to be wholly avoided as sources of temptation and pleasure, or else were regarded as fellow ascetics and travellers on the selfsame thorny and bitter road to heaven. Setting aside the facts that the passion for asceticism has its roots in the religious instincts, especially when these are evolved naturally or by education of a certain narrow type—and that it possesses affinities in the (often misunderstood) teachings of Christ —there were certain operative causes at work which serve to explain its enormous influence in the middle ages. (1) The Church itself had subordinated morality and human duty to Theology. Instead of placing man, as an object of service, on the level of God Himself, as Christ did, it established an impassable gulf between the religious and the ethical duty. The sole attention of the Christian being directed to the task of saving his soul, was necessarily concentrated on himself. Hence all his efforts acquired a peculiarly insidious flavour of selfishness. Asceticism was only a form of mischievous self-indulgence. Prayers and penances were bribes to secure the favour of God. Macerations and tortures were preparatives, and provocatives, calculated to effect an entrance into, and to enhance the pleasures of heaven. Thus the Church, by her false teaching, placed a direct premium on the most fatal and benumbing kind of selfishness—religious selfishness. Even allowing a certain modicum of conscientiousness to pertain to her ascetic doctrine, it is certain that in her excessive advocacy of it she herself was impelled by selfish motives. With her characteristic astuteness she perceived that the submissive spirit engendered by perpetual and unlimited self-sacrifice, the intellectual stolidity induced by a monotonous round of religious duties—the reputation of superior sanctity that attached to asceticism, were all materials she could employ for her own ascendancy and ambition. Accordingly she favoured by all means in her power that Monastic Conception of Christianity and existence against which the Renaissance and the Reformation, and since their time the reason and common-sense of civilized humanity, have so vehemently protested. But though the Romish Church was thus guilty of this, as of every other, perversion of Primitive Christianity, there were other circumstances in mediæval Italy which seemed to set a seal on her teaching. First was the repeated and profound conviction of the approaching end of the world. As a preparation for this event what was so effective as a cloistral life of Prayer and Penance. Hence Feudal

barons and high-born ladies gave not only themselves but, what was of more importance, their wealth, into the hands of the Church; and both the spiritual and territorial power of Rome were immeasurably increased by every Eschatological Panic that invaded Christendom. It is not wonderful that the Church in the persons of superstitious Pontiffs like Gregory I. undertook to foretell these profitable contingencies. In a superstitious and unenquiring age her power was too firmly based to be affected by the non-fulfilment of her vaticinations, and if she failed to secure the immediate enjoyment of Heaven for her votaries, the *contretemps* was largely compensated by a greater acquisition of Earth for herself. Moreover in Italy, both the general asceticism of mediæval Christianity, and the fear of an impending Final judgment, had their gloom intensified by political troubles. When towns, convents, private houses, churches were ravaged by one horde of Barbarians after another,—when uncertainty and insecurity infested the ordinary concerns of life,—when ignorance and superstition were elevated to cardinal virtues, and man was delivered over a helpless prey to Sacerdotalism, the conditions of existence were hardly of such a character as to warrant a cheerful optimistic theory of Life. The result of this ascetic culture, or rather mis-culture, was the diffusion of a narrow spirit of Pietism, obscurantism, and bigotry which opposed itself to all knowledge and enlightenment. Pagan learning was forbidden as a sin. Mental cultivation was tabooed as a frivolous and utterly needless attainment. Relaxation, whether mental or physical, was stigmatised as unholy. The enjoyment of Nature—the refining influences of the Arts, as Music, Poetry, and Painting all were anathematised as irreligious. Such were the boasted "ages of Faith," when the culminating perfection of Christianity consisted in a dull, superstitious, unenquiring stolidity.

The Renaissance justifies its name of New Birth by its emergence from the womb of this religious fanaticism. In every direction it heralded a revival of free activity and unrestricted enquiry. Mediæval obscuranticism, notwithstanding its cloke of religion, was recognized in its true colours by the newer thinkers. Guido Cavalcanti, *e.g.* compared the older ages of superstition to a churchyard—the veritable abode of death and corruption. Petrarca, from the scholar's standpoint, inveighs against the formalism and ignorance of preceding Christianity; while Giordano Bruno in a well-known sonnet brands the typical religionism of Rome with the name of Asinity. Led by thinkers such as these, the Renaissance introduced a revival into every domain of human activity. In Poetry, Music, Painting, Architecture, as well as in Literature and Philosophy, there was a gradual abandonment of old forms, of antiquated ideas, methods

and standards. Instead of regarding the earth as a gloomy prison men began to appreciate the beauties of Nature, to take delight in the changes of the seasons, in the pleasures of rural life, to speak with due poetic rapture of the beauty of flowers, and the melody of birds, to describe in exquisite word-painting the manifold charms of natural scenery. Petrarca's description of the lovely Vale of Vaucluse, and the inimitable sketches—like cabinet pictures—of the wooded valleys and rivers round Certaldo, with which Boccaccio embellishes his *Decameron*, are illustrations of this new appreciation of Nature. Instead of confining their studies to devotional and ascetic works men began to manifest a taste for Humane Literature and the fine Arts. Instead of expending their physical strength on penitential discipline and self-torture, they listened to the dictates of Nature, and adopted the opposite régime of music, feasting and dancing.

Nor was this resuscitation of a new world of joy and beauty exclusively a product of reaction. In part it was also spontaneous, one effect among the countless others of the general excitation and ferment of the period. An additional impulse, from an extraneous source, was moreover imparted to it by the revival of Classical Literature. Men were not long in discovering the harmony that existed between humanistic studies and their newly-awakened impulses. Horace, Martial, Ovid, Tibullus were nearer to their sympathies than the monastic teaching to which their fathers listened. It was out of this deep feeling for Naturalism, together with the Classicalism that made Pagan Art and Literature the single standard of Perfection for the Renaissance, that Italian Art took its rise. The Paintings of Masaccio, Da Vinci, Raffael and del Sarto, the Sculpture of Donatello, Sangallo and Michael Angelo, and the Architecture of Bramante, Michael Angelo and Brunelleschi are as much a reaction against Asceticism, and a product of Free-thought as the *Decameron* or the *Morgante Maggiore.*

The breach between Asceticism and Humanism which began outside the Church, and in defiance of her teaching soon extended itself to the Papacy, and generated that antagonism between her teaching and her practice which assumed so portentous an aspect in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However highly the Popes of the Renaissance esteemed Asceticism as the ally of superstition and sacerdotalism, they were in private life as much admirers of Humanism as the Free-thinking leaders of the movement. And as their boast of infallibility might be alleged to be more conclusively demonstrated by their conduct than by their official utterances, the reaction against Asceticism had so far a right to claim the sanction of the power that contributed so much to its origin.

REACTION AGAINST SACERDOTALISM.

Among its other resuscitations and revivals the Renaissance gave new birth to Humanity. The results of Sacerdotalism are to obliterate and distort man, his nature, his feelings, his wants and his sympathies; the aim of the Italian Revival, in this aspect harmonizing with the spirit of Christ, was to restore to him those rights and that consideration which are inherently his due. Hence arose gradually a higher estimate of conduct and practice, as distinct from speculation and belief; and a tendency to assess the merit of the latter by the worth of the former. This I need hardly remind you is the very opposite method to that pursued by Roman Christianity. Acting on the erroneous principle that ethical conduct is determined primarily by intellectual propositions or metaphysical formula, she insisted in the first instance on correct belief, or what she declared to be such. Orthodoxy being thus established as the chief virtue of Christians, soon arrogated to herself the claim of being their only virtue. From the point of view of sacerdotalism and unscrupulous ascendancy Romanism was no doubt right. Whatever her lack of ethical perception there was no deficiency in the selfish astuteness which has ever been the ruling principle of her action. Every autocratic despotism, secular as well as sacred, instinctively multiplies laws, restrictions and prohibitions in order not only to the assertion of its prerogative, but to make the obedience exacted from its subjects more complete and submissive. But, in the interests of freedom and Christian morality, nothing could well have been more disastrous. Its inevitable outcome was to establish that divorce between Ethics and religion which is still the plague-spot of Roman Catholicism. How distinctly this feature is marked on the Church of the Renaissance it is needless to point out. Protestant Church historians have not been backward in expatiating on a theme which so completely justifies their theological standpoint. Nor was the incongruous spectacle of a religion indirectly inculcating immorality lost on the free-thinkers of the Renaissance. The facilities the Church conceded to crime and moral laxity, by means of her doctrines and the examples of her Popes and clergy, forms the one favourite and inexhaustible topic of all the Italian Novelists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Nor was the ruthless severity she meted out to trifling dogmatic aberrations suffered to pass unnoticed. We shall have to touch this subject again when we come to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Meanwhile we have an interesting illustration of the Church's different method of regarding dogmatic and ethical obligations, respectively, in the promises of Innocent III. to those who took part

in the crusade against the Albigeois. The savage followers of Simon de Montfort, for the ruthless massacre of peaceable and helpless citizens, were rewarded with a remission of all their sins from the hour of their Baptism up to that time. They were also absolved from the payment of their debts, even though they had sworn to pay them. It is almost impossible to believe that such a flagrant mockery of the first principles of Christianity and Natural Religion was ever perpetrated. But the instance proves—whenever the claims of orthodoxy and humanity seem to come in conflict—rather the rule than the exception in the history of the Papacy. The well known sale of indulgences to build the church of St. Peter, which happily brought about the Reformation, is another example of the subserviency of moral to sacerdotal requirements. If this was the conduct of leading Roman hierarchs—of Popes, Bishops and Councils, who blasphemously claimed to be guided by the Holy Ghost—the knowledge of the people could scarce be of a higher quality; nor was their behaviour likely to be influenced by more unselfish considerations. The story told by Poggio in his *Facetiæ*[1] of the brigand who in his confession passed over many murders and deeds of violence, and dwelt with the deepest remorse and penitential unction on the sin of having inadvertently swallowed a few drops of milk during Lent, is one example, out of many, both of the popular recognition of the principles by which the Papacy was dominated, and of the satire and invective employed to attack it.

It is due to the men of the Renaissance to say that without any profound reverence for Religion as a speculative creed, they fully recognized the mischievous character of this teaching. If Christianity had ceased to dominate and ameliorate human conduct, of what earthly use was it? If the salt had lost its savour wherewith could it be salted? They saw that Romanism had not only failed in the ethical part of its mission, but had become itself a central agency and propagator of every species of immorality. Regarding the matter ironically, they might, like Abraham the Jew in Boccaccio's novels, have considered the prosperity of Rome, notwithstanding its turpitude, as a mark of special Divine Protection; but looking at it earnestly they could not help admitting the failure of Roman Christianity at the precise point where failure is most disastrous. Judging the creed by its results, all arguments derived from its purity, antiquity, apostolicity, or other supposed sanctions were worse than useless. What authoritative intellectual proposition could by any possibility justify inhumanity? What relation could exist between

[1] Edition Lieux., vol. i. p. 114.

purity of Faith and impurity of Life that was not subversive of both? or what Dogma, or dogmatic system could claim to over-ride the natural rights, feelings and duties of man? We cannot feel surprised that the Creed which sheltered such abuses should have been assailed, that the Free-thought of the Renaissance should have attacked the spurious Christianity of Rome. We are apt to blame the licence of speculation and action on the part of the leading thinkers of the Renaissance, but the fault is in reality that of the Church. Professing to join in indissoluble links both creed and conduct, she had for her selfish purposes relaxed the claims of the latter and more important moiety; and the men of the Renaissance could hardly have done less than free themselves also from the bonds of the former. No doubt other causes were in existence which contributed to a similar result, *e.g.* the prevailing conception of liberty, derived from political struggles, and an exaggerated persuasion of the claims of Nature (though this was also as we have seen a reaction against Ecclesiasticism) but the primary cause of the Decadence of Dogmatic belief, and the Anti-christianity of the Renaissance, is to be found in the Church's own inversion of the principles of Christ, the subordination of Ethical to Intellectual rectitude, and the gradual elimination of the less important of the two co-efficients, which was the unavoidable outcome of that position. Besides, even setting aside divergent standpoints, the men of the Renaissance only followed, in their licentious lives, the examples set before them by their clerical teachers; and they did not add to their other immoralities the master vice of hypocrisy.

Nor were these thinkers without numerous examples of moral rectitude outside the bounds of dogmatic Christianity, and, so far, of the independence of ethical practice in respect of speculative belief. Larger acquaintance with classical antiquity disclosed the noble roll of names of virtuous heathens such as *e.g.* Sokrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aristides, and countless others whose lives would have adorned any religion. Islamism too, notwithstanding the opprobrium Christianity continually poured upon it, abounded in examples of men, both rulers and subjects, whose lives were models of rectitude and purity. The justice, benignity and tolerance of Saladin passed into a proverb at a time when the lives of Popes and Cardinals had become a scandalous byword through the length and breadth of Christendom. How much the same recoil against excessive speculation, to the prejudice of ethical duty, contributed to the German Reformation, as well as to various ineffectual attempts within the Church itself, we need not now inquire; the general subject belongs to the domain of Church History. I will only observe that the same inclination to regard

Belief as superior to Practice, to over-estimate the influence of speculative notions on human action, and to despise other motive principles which help to determine the conduct of men, still prevails in Roman Catholicism; and, by means of that Church, has become an *hæreditas damnosa* more or less disseminated throughout the religious communities of Europe, even those that claim the appellation of Protestant. But we must not pass over one notable result of this severance of morality from religion on the part of the Church, *i.e.* it was attended by a revived interest in all social and ethical questions. Christianity, having abjured for her own selfish purposes, the humanitarianism which formed her true starting-point, the mischief was immediately rectified by the social conscience of European Society. There is indeed in human history, as in the constitution of the individual man, a principle of compensation by means of which the functions of an atrophied or diseased organ may be discharged by another; and few things are more striking in the philosophical contemplation of the Renaissance, than the renewed attention paid to moral questions, and the crop of ethical terms with conceptions unrelated to religion, which seemed to spring up on every side. The phenomenon is like that which we find in the History of Greece, when the popular notions of the Olympian deities, and their position as the moral dictators of humanity, having been refuted by the Eleatics and Sophists, an immediate investigation into Ethical questions was started by Sokrates and his school. No doubt this curiosity on the part of the Renaissance thinkers formed a portion of the general spirit of inquiry which distinguished it, and which investigated every subject matter of human interest or knowledge. But the stress on Ethical questions was especially marked, as if they were anxious to restore the regulative principles of human morality which the Church had bartered away for sordid gain. As might have been anticipated, one feature of this Ethical activity is the variety of moral terms and their significations to which it gave birth, though they are all assumed to share a restraining and beneficial influence. Thus we have virtue, honour, fidelity, *prudhommie*, and other moral qualities, instead of the usual "Cardinal" and Theological virtues insisted on; while, instead of the sanctions of religion, appeal is made to honour, fame, glory, fortune, patriotism, and other more or less Pagan influences. As an illustration of the diverse senses in which ethical terms were accepted by the thinkers of the Renaissance, we may take the word virtue. This term, used by classical writers in the sense of manly excellence, and by the Church as the epitome of all morality, is employed to signify any human merit on which the writer lays stress, or which seems especially needed by the

circumstances of the time. Macchiavelli employs the term as a synonym for that combination of astuteness and power—that centaur conjunction of lion and fox—which he so greatly reverenced. With Niccolo Niccoli—the Sokrates of Florence who used to stop young men in the streets and exhort them to virtue—the term signified the study of Classical Literature. Pandolfini, again, defines the term as 'all gaiety and grace.' Where an æsthetic conception of it seems implied the same author adds that 'it proceeds from a necessary law of our nature, not from the command of any superior authority.'[1] Guicciardini, with his Stoic philosophy, uses the word in its strictly ethical meaning; saying that together with Intellectual advantages it constitutes the *summum bonum* of humanity,[2] while Stephen Guazzo, in his 'Dialoghi Piacevole,' makes it include all theological as well as moral excellencies, enumerating among its effects the undertaking of long pilgrimages by land and sea![3] Similarly the word 'honour' receives a variety of meanings, though generally it is used as at present as a kind of social lay principle of restraint in cases where religious principles are either inappropriate or distrusted. As we shall again have to notice, in the case of Charron and others, the substitution of secular or at least untheological principles, as moral incentives and deterrents, for the effete precepts and sanctions of the Church, I need not now pursue this subject further. Enough will have been said to show the working of Free-thought in the ethical conceptions of the Renaissance; and to note how this stress on moral questions was caused by the perversion of the mainsprings of human conduct on the part of Papal Christianity.

REACTION AGAINST DOGMA.

But this perversion was far from being the only one of which the Church was guilty. As part of the reaction we are now considering against its creed as well as its practice, we must point out the justification it derived from the perversion of dogma. The development of Christianity from its few rudimentary elements in the teaching of

[1] Villari, *Macchiavelli*, p. 195.

[2] Guicciardini, Op. Ined., vol. x. p. 108.

[3] P. 102. The same writer, though an orthodox Romanist, is full of the enthusiasm of morality which distinguishes all the earnest thinkers of the Renaissance. This is the way *e.g.* in which he addresses Virtue. "O virtù immaculata, O virtù santa, O virtù cui non si può dare altro maggior titolo che di virtuosa, qual mente sia giamai che à pieno ti capisca, qual lingua che con dignità t' essalti? qual Homero, qual Marone, qual Tullio, o quel Demosthene che secondo i tuoi grandi meriti con finissimo inchiostro ti lodi, ti canti, ti celebri, t' innalzi et ti coroni?' etc., etc.—*Dialoghi*, p. 103.

Christ, we have more than once noticed. Here it is important to mark that this monstrous superstructure was a growth in certain given directions. Like some kinds of geological strata, it reveals, on examination, certain well-marked lines of cleavage which denote the manner in which it was originally formed. An investigation of these 'planes of stratification' is essential for our purpose, because it is along them, as in so many directions of least resistance, that incisive criticism and free-thought are found to run. So that, regarding the Renaissance as a disruption of the older fabric of Catholic Theology, we shall find that the actual fractures followed the course marked out for them by the Free-thought of the period. The evolution of Roman Christianity then took place on the following main lines:—

1. In the direction of Inscrutability and Supernaturalism.
2. ,, of excessive Christology.
3. ,, of materialism.
4. ,, of spiritual ascendancy and material advantage.

1. Every Revelation, in the usual sense of the word, must include elements of a supernatural kind. In an universe constituted like our own and with human faculties of such spiritual and imaginative reach as we possess, a religion divested of supernaturalism would be incongruous. Even the primary article of all religions—belief in God—is itself encompassed with mystery. Yet there is scarce anything more striking in Christ's own teaching than the little stress He places on the merely thaumaturgic and mysterious elements of His mission. On every attempt to enhance the natural marvels of His life and works He repeatedly throws cold water. As the Son of man, He insists on His humanity, and for the most part keeps the consciousness of His divinity in the background. But the Christian Church started with a directly opposite tendency. From the first manifestation of excessive zeal on the part of Christ's immediate followers—who were ready to magnify His ordinary acts into miracles and to discern mysteries in his simplest utterances—down to the Council of Trent, the course of Christian Theology has been in the direction of supernaturalism. Allowing such a tendency to be in harmony with some of the instincts of human nature, and to be common to every religion that possesses a history, its excess is undoubtedly at variance with other human rights of not less importance, and is opposed to the advance of mature civilization and enlightenment. No law of human progress is more satisfactorily ascertained than that which binds it, in the relation of cause and effect, to the diminution of the Supernatural and the simplification of the Mysterious. I am far from saying that these elements can ever be eliminated from human knowledge and belief. In some respects

indeed they are perpetually increasing, but we can so far limit their scope as to prevent their interference with freedom of thought, or the legitimate advance of human knowledge. A tendency therefore to supernaturalize needlessly and obtrusively must be accepted as an infallible token of sacerdotalism, and *ipso facto* of religious deterioration. To point out in detail how this tendency grew in the Church, what circumstances were in its favour, its pernicious effect in rendering man the abject slave of superstition, would be in reality to write the whole of Church history. It is enough to remark that the common aim of all ecclesiastical authorities was to generate that passive acquiescence in unlimited dogma which was tantamount to the abnegation of all thought and reason. Councils *e.g.* claiming the guidance of the Holy Ghost so elaborated and subtilized the more speculative aspects of Christianity, and affirmed their decisions so imperiously, that it must have seemed to an impartial thinker as if the sole mission of Christianity was to formulate a series of metaphysical enigmas and insist on their unconditional acceptance on the part of humanity. The more incredulous, incomprehensible and self-contradictory any dogma, the greater its chance of adoption by the Church. Faith, in the sense of unenquiring receptivity, being regarded as the main virtue of Christians, its value and merit were enhanced in direct proportion to the inconceivability of its object. Hence every new dogma, as it received the authentication of Pope or Council, became further removed from the sphere of human ideas and interests. Every new definition, refining upon abstractions and distinctions which had already attained an extreme point of tenuity, became the nucleus of fresh mysteries and inscrutabilities, and thereby an additional incubus on the over-weighted human reason. Christian Theology in mediæval times was doubtless sustained, in her stress on excessive supernaturalism, by the fact that secular knowledge also laboured under a similar burden, as we have already noticed. But the appeal to extreme supernaturalism is more mischievous in Theology than in Science, for the very reason that its principle is inherent in the former, whereas in the latter supernatural theories are accidental and are certain to be qualified sooner or later by other natural tests and sanctions to which all science must defer.

Of excessive supernaturalism the inevitable outcome is gross superstition, in other words intellectual thraldom of the most debasing and pernicious kind. Granting the existence of theological inscrutabilities, they must at least be real, not fictitious. Like the ultimate truths of Philosophy and Science they must be attained by the independent action of the intellect operating with freedom upon them, not enforced *ab extra* and on purely *a priori* grounds. No hierophant or ecclesi-

astical despot has a right to demand deference to an inexplicable mystery before the grounds and extent of the mysteriousness have been carefully scrutinized and determined. History swarms with examples of the mischief which invariably attends the passive reception of marvels and authoritative dicta, from whatever source emanating. And this mischief is greater in Theology on account of the sacred inviolable character pertaining to the very notion of the supernatural. Resistance to its behests immediately assumes the portentous aspect of 'fighting against God.' Few religious thinkers, in any time, possess sufficient critical power, combined with intellectual independence, to discriminate between the possible supernatural germ and the undoubted human agency which arrogates to itself the power of diffusing and imparting it. The latter must always be a matter of criticism to many who are content to accept the former as a general principle. The channels to which the belief of the middle ages ascribed the function of communicating supernatural powers were many. Dreams, lots, astrological influences, magical rites, ecclesiastical offices were all credited with miraculous powers, and most of them were openly or secretly wielded by the Church. Some of the popes even were supposed to possess magical and necromantic powers. The result of this excessive supernaturalism was an abject superstition, which although dignified by the euphonious title of 'Faith,' was productive of many unmitigated evils. The idea, in short, had become an intolerable yoke on the feelings, thoughts and desires of Christendom, repressing every movement of free intellectual activity, paralysing every action of human life, destroying every generous impulse, vitiating every source of innocent enjoyment, transforming Deity into a capricious and sullen tyrant, and changing Nature into a veritable Inferno whose forces were supposed to be wielded by beings equally inscrutable and malignant.

Against this exaggerated supernaturalism, the Free-thought of the Renaissance was a justifiable and sorely-needed recoil. With the emancipation it effected from religious, there was a progressive liberation from secular, superstition, as far as one was independent of the other. No doubt the process was very gradual. All the leaders of the Renaissance are more or less believers in supernatural agencies. In many cases men who had thrown off every vestige of deference to the Church and the priest yet trembled before the wizard, the astrologer, or the necromancer. Nor need we feel surprise at the transference to Nature of marvellous powers hitherto shared largely by the Church. To the child-like intellect of mediæval times, Nature was an unexplored temple of mystery, her real marvels and her more ordinary processes were alike contemplated through a veil of mingled

awe and wonderment, but she possessed over the Church the advantage of laying herself open to investigation and experiment, and of not relying exclusively on the *ipse dixits* of Popes and Councils.[1] The reaction against the supernaturalism of the Church was certain, in time, to diminish the marvellous aspects of Nature; especially when truer conceptions of her irreversible laws began to gain ground. If thinking men began their career of skepticism by distrusting exorcism, the miraculous powers of relics, the genuineness of winking Madonnas and the other paraphernalia of sacerdotalism, they could hardly fail to apply the same wholesome doubt to dreams, comets, astrological signs, and magical rites. There was thus a progressive antagonism against the supernatural, which taking its rise in the Church, extended itself to every province of human knowledge and feeling that groaned under the intolerable weight of a similar incubus. We must admit that this reaction in the Renaissance became itself extravagant. Because the Church had overstrained the principle of the supernatural, it was rashly concluded that it had no real existence. Because relics, charms, miraculous powers were found deceptive, the very foundations of Christianity and all Religion, were called in question. But for this abuse the Church itself is primarily responsible. The excessive naturalism of Renaissance Free-thought is a legitimate effect of the extravagant supernaturalism of Christianity that preceded and induced it.

2. Another main line of dogmatic development which provoked a reaction in the Renaissance, is what I have taken leave to call the exaggerated Christology of the Fathers and the Councils of the Church, I mean the ever-increasing tendency to confine the work of Christ, together with the principles and results of his teaching, to their most narrow and partial significance, instead of including the larger aspects and interests suggested by the whole universe, or entire humanity. A particular revelation of authoritative truth must have, in respect of time and place, a historical and local basis; but the very claim to universality implied in the words 'truth,' 'authority,' will always tend to merge its actual origin in a wider conception of its real object and destiny. The Romish Church on the whole not only failed to grasp this unsectarian aspect of Christianity, but on the contrary directed all its efforts to the task of still further limiting the speculation and privileges of the Church. What was historical and temporary in the origin of Christianity she did her utmost still further to circumscribe. The Jewish exclusiveness against which Christianity was a protest, had again found a place in the perverted development of

[1] This aspect of Nature is frequently insisted on by Giordano Bruno.

the latter religion; and Papal Rome was the worthy successor of the Jerusalem of the Pharisees. A striking instance of this unchristian sectarianism is found in the stress on the false and mischievous maxim, 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus,' than which no greater libel has ever been uttered against the Eternal, or the Providential government of the universe. Another instance is the gradual substitution of the worship of Christ and the Virgin for that of God the Father, in direct opposition both to the letter and spirit of Christ's own teaching. No doubt the larger intellects among the schoolmen were, as we have seen, able to oppose this limited view of Christianity. Men like Scotus Erigena and Aquinas were not likely to merge the conception of the universe, the sums total of space and time, into the narrow bounds of a few historical events. But intellects like theirs, capable of taking a philosophical view of Christianity were rare, and did not exercise a great influence on the main body of Christian teachers. This enlarged conception of Christian truth gives us the real significance of the Pantheism to which so many of the powerful minds among the schoolmen were really inclined. They were compelled, in order to make the limits of Christianity correspond with the larger bounds of the universe in space and time to infinitize, to contemplate the historical fabric of Christianity in Spinozistic terminology '*sub specie æternitatis*.' In this respect the metaphysical tendencies of Renaissance Free-thinkers,—men like Pomponazzi, Bruno and Vanini —are akin to the efforts and aspirations of the noblest intellects among the schoolmen. Though operating from dissimilar standpoints, and with varying ideas as to the scope of their attempts, both take a broad view of the real character and destiny of Christianity. Both endeavour to refine its materialism and spiritualize its literalism, both seek to universalize its partial teachings, and to rationalize its extreme dogmas. So that the pantheistic tendencies which distinguish the metaphysics of the Renaissance, and which I regard as a reaction against Roman sectarianism, found a point of support and so far of justification among leading thinkers of the Church itself.

3. But the Renaissance was also a reaction against another deterioration of Christianity. I mean the evolution of its dogma in the direction of materialism. In this case again there was a distinct conflict between the original germ and its outgrowth. Christianity in its primary form was an appeal to the religious consciousness, the spiritual perceptions of mankind. Its Deity and its worship were alike spiritual. But the Church unhappily started on the opposite path of anthropomorphism and materialism. This was especially the case in her presentation of popular theology; for the metaphysical training of her ablest schoolmen sufficed to preserve them from gross and pue-

rile conceptions of transcendental truths. In mediæval times this development of Christian dogma, in the direction of extravagance of conception and coarseness of expression, assumes a portentous and repulsive aspect. Partly, no doubt, this must be ascribed to the rude manners of the time. Theology had become brutalized by association with men of brutal passions and ideas, and by having for its teachers a clergy in no respect above the vulgar crowd. Mainly, however, it was only the climax of the dogmatic growth which the Church itself had initiated. Councils, Fathers and Popes, not content with promulgating speculative doctrines and forcing them on Christians, had vied with each other in excessive definition, extravagant elaboration, and grotesque illustrations of Christian truth. What was spiritual they materialized, what was symbolical they interpreted as real, what was Divine they humanized, and what was human they brutalized. It could scarcely be expected but that the crowd of laymen, ill-educated and superstitious, would endeavour to emulate their ecclesiastical superiors. Accordingly we have, in the centuries preceding the Renaissance, ideas of Christianity, the objects of its worship, its rites and its dogmas, such as would well befit the most savage fetish worshippers that ever lived; and which go far to justify the scornful unbelief of the Renaissance. It would be difficult to name a province of Roman Christianity that was not vitiated by animalism and materialism. All its religious rites were surrounded with sensuous accessories, as if its declared object had been to trail supersensual beings and truths in the filth of human frailty and corruption. All its dogmas were materialized, in many cases to a repulsive and obscene degree. The Divine personality of Deity was so limited and humanized that there was absolutely no scope left for His relations to the universe. The doctrine of the Trinity was interpreted as a rank and unmitigated Tritheism; and when the worship of the Virgin and saints and martyrs was added, Romanism became, what it has since remained, an exaggerated Polytheism. The dogma of the Incarnation especially suffered from the crude animalism of its interpreters. It was investigated, discussed, and explained with such sensuous particularity and revolting detail[1] that its spiritual significance was utterly lost. The Christian sacraments were transformed into charms; and their symbolical elements were converted into material agents operating by material methods. They were thus placed on an equality with magical rites; and the Christian priest became a kind of ecclesiastical juggler or wizard. All persons and objects sub-

[1] Comp. on this subject Hone's *Ancient Mysteries*, and the passages collected by Bartoli, *I Primi due Secole*, p. 206.

mitted to priestly consecration were assumed to undergo a change in their material constituents resembling that which the loadstone effects in a piece of steel. The climax of this tendency was reached in the doctrine of transubstantiation. On no dogma of the Church was the wit and raillery of Renaissance Free-thinkers expended more readily than on this. They recognised the extravagance of sacerdotal pretension underlying it, and were not backward in *reductio ad absurdum* applications of it. Nor was this gross carnality limited to this life. The world to come was conceived from a similarly sensuous standpoint. The doctrine of the Resurrection, *e.g.* was asserted and explained in a repulsively hyper-physical sense. The glories of heaven, the pains of purgatory and hell, were bodily and fleshly in the greatest conceivable degree. In each case material beings were supposed to be acted upon by material and physical agencies. Dante's *Inferno*, with its incongruous mixture of physical elements and spiritual qualities, represents that point of development when the grosser conceptions of mediæval times as to the world beyond the grave were assuming a less extravagant form. He is thus a leader of the Renaissance, in its reaction against the materialism of the Church. Not that the thinkers in this movement were in every instance defenders of a more spiritual conception of Christian doctrine, or that they cared very much for any form of religion. But they were keen-sighted enough to detect the incongruity of impalpable abstractions represented in terms of tangible sensuous existences, and the inherent absurdity of spiritual agencies operating by material means. They refused to yield that absolute unbelief in the evidence of their senses which an alleged change of essence in a given substance, accompanied by a self-evident similarity of attributes, demanded. Perhaps they were inclined to lay too much stress on the dictum, that the non-apparent and non-existent must be judged by the same test. But it cannot be doubted that the general direction of their skepticism, and their supreme contempt for the sacerdotal jugglery which had so long deluded Christendom, were both abundantly justified.

Besides this opposition to theological materialism, grounded upon reason and common sense, there was, in the case of some of the foremost among Renaissance thinkers, a philosophical source whence proceeded a similar antagonism. The tendency to Pantheism, which marks so strongly the Free-thought of the period, was a recoil against the materialistic, as it was against the sectarian, conception of mediæval Christianity. Men like Cardinal de Cusa and Giordano Bruno demanded a freer range for their religious imagination, a more spiritual direction for their aspirations, than were supplied by the materialism of Rome. The souls of these Idealists, filled with the

immensity of the creation, revolted from the popular representation of Deity as a grey-headed old man seated in a chair with a globe in his hand. The only conception of the Incarnation of which they could approve was the metaphysical one of St. John's Gospel, with perhaps an additional stage in the direction of transcendentalism. For the coarse carnality of such dogmas as transubstantiation, the immaculate conception, and other figments of a similar kind, they entertained a well-grounded horror. If the idealism of such thinkers tended occasionally, to annihilate historical Christianity, it certainly saved them from the still greater degradation of abject materialism and fetish worship. Their heresy, if so it must be termed, was at least the product of thought and reason, and not the outcome of brutish stolidity. Their error, even if it could be proved, enjoyed the sanction of philosophy, while the opposition of spirit to flesh and letter was in accordance with the highest principles of Christianity.

4. But the perversions of Christian dogma already considered, *i.e.* in the direction of sectarianism and materialism, were not those which were first suspected and assailed by the Free-thinkers of the Renaissance. The corruption of Roman Christianity first approved itself to the popular mind by the astute adaptation of its dogmas to purposes of spiritual aggrandisement and material advantage. While the truths and duties of primitive Christianity were of so simple a character as almost to dispense with a sacerdotal caste, all the energies of Romanism were directed to the inculcation of belief and duties which would make such a caste absolutely indispensable. The Church had thus a direct motive in increasing the number and enhancing the inscrutability of her dogmas. Their inconceivability gave her teaching an esoteric flavour, and increased the importance of the clergy. Doctrines, like sacred relics—sharing in many cases an equal authenticity, were carefully enclosed in caskets, and kept, so to speak, under clerical lock and key. They were intended not to be handled and criticized, but surveyed reverently from a distance, and worshipped. Their depositories, no matter of what material, might perhaps be kissed, but even these were not to be touched by profane fingers. Nor was it only in speculative belief that the intervention of the priest was indispensable; it was not less so in the practical concerns of ordinary life. In mediæval times, as in Catholic countries now, hardly an action could be performed without priestly intermediation. It was not merely the religionizing every secular act, the consecration of human life, that was aimed at, though this might have been the ostensible pretence put forward to justify such interference; but the complete effacement of the Christian individuality—the entire surrender of all thought and volition into

clerical domination. With the reaction against this religious thraldom men began to observe how uniformly all the dogmas of Papal Christianity tended in the same direction of ascendency and profit. Not a dogma or a religious rite pertained to the Church which she had not directly or indirectly diverted into a method of increasing her power or filling her coffers. Men readily suspect good offices or beliefs which redound to the personal advantage of those who confer or maintain them. There is no inherent connexion between speculative verities and material silver and gold. To be acceptable, truth must not be entirely divested of disinterestedness. But such unselfish truths were rare in mediæval Romanism. On the other hand, all the blessings of Christianity were retailed like huckster's wares. Divine grace, pardon and love—the permanent and indefeasible attributes of Deity—were objects of sordid traffic. Nor was the sale of such spiritual commodities limited to this life. The blessings of the future world—immunity from hell and purgatory—formed one of the most lucrative sources of Papal income. One effect of this conversion into articles of barter of all dogmatic beliefs was to increase in the minds of intelligent laymen that feeling of indifference for their speculative import which was first engendered by sacerdotal pretension and exclusiveness. But the suspicion awakened by the mercantile character of Church dogmas extended itself in time to their philosophical and religious significance. The two dogmas most questioned by the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation were Immortality[1] and the Indulgences. In both cases the controversy was originated by the excessive greed of Rome. Men began to investigate the nature and reality of that spiritual happiness of futurity which could only be attained by a lavish expenditure of present and terrestrial advantages, just as Luther set on foot the Reformation by questioning the value of heavenly pardons which might be secured for a little earthly silver. I do not wish to credit the zeal of Renaissance thinkers against the various perversions of Roman Christianity with uniformly pure motives. Their object, it must be admitted, was almost entirely destructive. They made no pretence of supplying, as Luther tried to do, by a purer faith, truths which had become arrant falsities through the sectarianism, the materialism and the selfishness of the Church. Some of them, probably confounding the perverted development of Christianity with its pure source, set their faces altogether against it, and embraced Epicureanism or some other form of ancient thought

[1] Comp. on this point Burckhardt, *Cultur d. Renaissance Germ. ed.*, vol. ii. p. 312.

which best commended itself to their intellect. But they discerned, as clearly as if they had adopted a religious standpoint, the innumerable mischiefs, political and intellectual as well as social and religious, of which the Great Babylon was the centre. Although professedly irreligious, they were not so far lost to a sense of ethical rectitude and spiritual fitness as not to perceive the radical unsuitability of a creed based upon selfishness and slavery, and sustained by ignorance and obscurantism, to be the sole directress of all human speculation and conduct. Pure negation, for the time being, was a preferable anchorage to a faith whose disastrous influences were so positive and unmistakable.

That this general recoil against Romish teaching should have spared the clergy was not to be expected. Indeed in point of time and of virulence of polemic the attack on ecclesiastics both preceded and exceeded that which was directed against their dogmas. Nor is this surprising. Doctrines are necessarily theories, or if alleged certainties are mostly abstractions, but men who administer or are influenced by them are concrete realities. They embody in a kind of incarnation their influences. Hence the merits and defects of a creed are more readily assessed, at least to popular comprehension, by its human products and ministers than by any other method; and attacks on the clergy thus form the chief starting-point of all the Free-thought of the middle ages. How general, and unhappily how well founded this animosity was, our investigations have already told us. This formed the subject of Goliard invective. Troubadours and Trouveres dealt with the same topic, Conteurs and Fabulists pursued the same theme. When the theatre became secularized it was a staple object of representation. The immunities of the clergy as a privileged class were no longer of any avail. Popular common sense, careless of subtle and theocratic distinctions between the man and the priest, inferred the character of the creed from that of its teachers. The wide separation of clergy and laity was a figment that could have deceived only the most stolidly ignorant, and it is one which virtually expired with the dawn of the Renaissance. The assumed sources of clerical superiority were then freely questioned, and their real nature and extent no less unreservedly canvassed. Of learning they had ceased even in the thirteenth century to be exclusive patrons. The study of classical authors, scholastic divinity, Arab and Romance literature had become the common property of all the forward thinkers of the period; and in most of these subjects the Romish priesthood was left far behind by the laity. The dissemination of learning by the Italian universities and schools served still more to equalize the intellectual positions of the two orders. If the

clergy could thus arrogate no superiority in respect of attainment, they could certainly claim none in respect of moral purity or rectitude of conduct. The shocking depravity of priests, monks and friars forms the chief subject of all the Anti-Romanist literature of the time. Their sole remaining prerogative—the special sacredness of their office—was under the circumstances not likely to command much reverence. If the tonsure, *e.g.* guaranteed no peculiar wisdom or sanctity—if the assumption of sacred vows was frequently followed by unusual turpitude—the mysterious graces assumed to be conferred in either case might fairly be questioned. Poggio Bracciolini satirically remarked that in the act of the tonsure priests 'parted with not only their hair, but with their virtue and their conscience.' As to the title of Saint, or the conception of holiness regarded as the accompaniment of sacred functions, the feeling of the time might be stated in Casti's lines:—

'Lo chiamar Santo: allor di Santo il nome
Fu annesso di persona e di mestiere,
Non di costume e di virtù, siccome
Poscia a talun il *Don* diessi, e il *Messere*
Per esser Santo uopo era sol le chiome
Cinte di mitra, o di tiara avere;
Onde Vescovi, Papi e somiglianti
O volessero o no, tutti eran Santi.'

In this respect of anti-sacerdotalism, the Renaissance, like every other great revolutionary movement, was largely leavened by ideas not only of 'liberty,' but of 'fraternity and equality.' The long-continued distinction between clergy and laymen, and the rites by which it was effected, were equally treated with disdain by the advanced thinkers of the period. Just as Petrarca poured his sarcasm on the University degree which translated the blockhead into a philosopher, so Poggio treats the ordination of sacred persons with similar contumely. 'Hence the clergy,' he says 'springing like mushrooms in an hour are rapidly advanced to the highest dignities. Thus it very frequently happens that you are obliged to venerate as a God a man whom you have been accustomed to despise as a mean, abject, ignoble and ill-bred character. By one word of the pontiff, the ignorant become, in the estimation of the vulgar, learned; the stupid, wise; the uninstructed, accomplished—though at the same time the real character of the men is precisely the same as it was before.'[2]

The same idea of essential equality between priests and people soon

[1] *La Papesse*, Ed. Liseux, p. 62.
[2] Comp. Shepherd's *Life of Poggio Bracciolini*, p. 286.

found its way into the popular sentiment. You will not need my reminding you how fully the early Reformation literature, in Germany and England, took cognizance of a principle which had already been insisted on by the Literati and secular Free-thinkers of France and Italy. Here *e.g.* are some lines from a Goliard poem, maintaining that there will be no difference between clergy and laity in the day of judgment:—

'Cum perventum fuerit ad examen veri
Ante thronum stabimus judicis severi
Non erit distinctio laici vel cleri
Nulla nos exceptio poterit tueri.'

And in still stronger terms:—

'Judicabit judices judex generalis
Nihil ibi proderit dignitas regalis
Sed fætorem sentiet pœnæ gehennalis
Sive sit episcopus, sive cardinalis.'[1]

But it was not only the equality between the clergy and laity that was insisted on by the Humanists. They turned the tables on their clerical opponents and openly accused them of being the pests of Italy, the chief causes of the manifold disorganizations political and religious from which that unhappy land suffered. Nor was this only the opinion of men like Rabelais and Boccaccio, who made the clergy the butt of their wit and raillery, but it was the opinion of austere and unsensational writers like Guicciardini, Macchiavelli and Poggio Bracciolini. Occasionally this anti-clerical animus assumed an extreme form, as if it were directed against the office itself rather than unworthy occupants of it. But as a rule the clergy were not backward in affording opportunities and ample justifications for the satire and invective of their foes. To obtain some idea both of the virulence of the anti-clerical feeling which was common more or less to all the Free-thinkers of the time, as well as of the justification that actually existed for such a feeling, you might read, *inter alia*, Bracciolini's *Dialogues*, especially that 'on hypocrisy.'[2] No doubt all the clergy were not intended to be included in this general condemnation. There were conspicuous instances of Bishops, Cardinals and even Popes sympathizing, and so far as they might, actually co-operating in the advance of humanism. Unluckily, however, these exceptions were rare—far too rare to modify the position of antagonism which Free-thought had rightly taken up against the clerical order. The mass of the clergy were justly regarded as fanatical obscurantists,

[1] *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, p. 53.

[2] See Ed. Brown *Fasciculus Rerum Expetend. et Fugiend.*, vol. ii. p. 571.

whose whole energies were bent on the perpetuation of the benighted ignorance, the cruel bigotry and dark superstition from which the Renaissance was, at least for a time, an auspicious deliverance.

I have thus endeavoured at some, though I hope not excessive, length to marshal the causes direct and indirect which contributed to the Free-thought of the Renaissance. Even our partial survey has ascertained these to be of various kinds—political, religious, commercial and literary. I am far from suggesting either that all those we have considered are of equal importance, or that there may not have been other important coefficients of which we have taken no account. The Renaissance, we must remember, is a vast, complex, many-sided movement, operating in different ways through the length and breadth of Italy, and assuming, during the two or three centuries of its short-lived existence, a varied and motley aspect. In North, South and Middle Italy, only taking these larger divisions, the conditions, political, religious and literary, differed so much that the phenomena necessarily assumed, in each particular instance, a peculiar character. Our task has been like the mapping of a large watershed and indicating the various affluents and tributaries which flow into the main stream. In doing this over an extensive, difficult and mountainous track, it is not impossible that a survey like ours may have been sometimes erroneous—that we have attached *e.g.* too much importance to one tributary, too little to another—that in the multiplicity of confluents we have sometimes mistaken the course of some minor rivulet—that we have not been able, in every instance, to trace the spring welling out of the mountain side through all its devious wanderings to its final junction with the main river. Still I think the chief currents of the common movement have been stated correctly. It only remains to take some note of the prominent characters formed by this movement and who contributed materially to its extension; to watch the action of Free-thought, not so much as influencing societies as moulding great men. Having surveyed the noble field of the Renaissance, we complete our task by estimating its noblest products; and, as in duty bound, we begin at our next meeting with: Dante.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CAUSES AND LEADERS.

Dante. ALTHOUGH neither as poet nor as thinker can Dante claim a foremost position among the agencies that contributed to the Renaissance, regarded as a movement of Free-thought, no summary of that movement, however slight, could be considered complete which took no account of the manifold and powerful influences exercised by the *Divina Commœdia* in the fourteenth century. The outline of Dante's painful history is so well known that it need not occupy our time. Its main facts are impressed in deeply graven characters on the pages of his great work. Hardly less clearly does the work bring before us the many-sided aspects and forces of the Renaissance. It is a kind of historical picture, or rather an enormous magic mirror, which, under the fictitious reflection of the affairs, institutions and personages of the unseen world, presents a complete and lively *tableau* of the actual men and events pertaining to the Italy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In its pages we have chronicled the feuds of Emperors and Popes; the struggles of sects and parties, political, municipal and ecclesiastical; the conflicts of institutions, mediæval and modern; the rivalries of cities; the religious crusades and commercial enterprises of which Italy was then the European centre; the conflicting mental tendencies and teachings of the dark ages on the one hand, and the Italian New-Birth on the other. The canvas is instinct with life and movement. The scenery and accessories may be extra-mundane, the actual personages whether denizens of the *Inferno* or the *Paradiso* are of the earth earthy. This assimilation of the seen and unseen, partly incongruous, partly the outcome of a profound truth, makes the latter a fair reflection of the former. Hence notwithstanding infernal circles and bolgias, the Mount of Purgatory and the more idealistic scenes of the Paradiso, the *Divina Commœdia* of Dante is almost as much a *Commédie Humaine* as that of De Balzac himself.

Dante's work therefore gives us the Renaissance still *in the making*. It is a collection of its constitutive elements and materials

brought together from so many distant regions of space and time, each with its inherent attractions and repulsions, as they were being mingled and concocted in the great crucible of Providence. As in a critical moment of a battle, when rival hosts are entangled together in inextricable confusion, it is impossible to foretell the event; so the philosophic reader of the *Divina Commœdia*, when it was first published, might well have felt some difficulty in determining the real permanent issue of the imbroglio therein depicted. On a point of vantage of nearly six centuries we can now discern to what offspring the political and mental throes of the period were really giving birth. The outcome is typified in the arrangement of the three acts of the *Commœdia*; for Dante's work, like the period of which it is so powerful an exponent, was the transitional purgatory that separated the infernal darkness and ignorance of Mediævalism from the Il Paradiso of the Reformation, and modern culture and liberty.

One effect of the wide diversity of Dante's great work and its Janus-like aspect to Mediævalism on the one hand, and the new culture on the other, has been to throw doubt on the nature of his real convictions. Père Hardouin thought that the *Commœdia* was the work of some anonymous disciple of Wiclif! And a book was published some twenty years since to prove that Dante was a 'heretic, a revolutionary and a socialist.'[1] On the other hand, the majority of his critics regard him as an orthodox Catholic, though an uncompromising denouncer of the temporal power, and the corruptions of the Papacy. One thing at least is clear: neither Dante nor his work can be called skeptical; and only in a very limited and moderate degree can they be said to possess elements of Free-thought. Not only was Dante a dogmatist, but he was vehemently and passionately so. First he was a dogmatist by nature and temperament; secondly, in his *Commœdia*, he conceives himself to possess a divinely authenticated mission as an apostle and reformer of ecclesiastical abuses, but a no less ardent defender of Romanist dogmas.

i. Dante's disposition is unmistakably depicted in his face: his morose expression reveals the countenance of a man not only soured by political disappointments, but animated by a spirit which, on due occasion, could become fanatical. The disclosure of his features is not belied by his life and writings. His political animosity against the enemies of himself and his party rises to a pitch of ungovernable exasperation. No doubt party spirit then ran high; and the ill-usage Dante endured might well have provoked a nature far less sensitive

[1] *Dante hérétique, revolutionaire, et socialiste, Revelations d'un Catholique sur le moyen Age*, par E. Aroux. Paris 1854. See a short criticism of this work in C. Cantu's *Gli eretici d' Italia*, vol. i. p. 146 etc.

than his own; still that the author of the *Commœdia* should have been guilty of throwing stones at women and children whom he overheard calumniating his party,[1] is a melancholy illustration of the intermingling of petty foibles with the sublimest excellencies in the human character. On one occasion, when irritated in a philosophical discussion, he employed the very unphilosophical response, 'It is not with arguments but with the knife that such brutal doctrines should be answered.'[2] Against the towns and provinces of Italy by which he conceived himself or his party had been aggrieved he expresses himself with a rancour and malignity almost incredible.[3] Nor is this extreme harshness confined to his personal and political foes; he is just as severe to heretics and dissentients from the creed of the Church. Theology, indeed, is a subject more vitally and permanently interesting to Dante than the alternations of political parties in his beloved Florence. The *Commœdia* is a handbook of mediæval Catholic dogma, just as Milton's *Paradise Lost* sets forth the creed of English Puritanism of the seventeenth century. A contemporary epitaph describes Dante:—

Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers.

And subsequent writers, like Ozanam, who have industriously collected all the phrases and words in which Dante speaks of the dogmatic teachings of the Church,[4] have no difficulty in confirming that verdict, and establishing his religious orthodoxy. The very form of the poem affords an admirable medium not only for touching on religious dogmas, but for venting theological and personal likes and dislikes. An imaginary Inferno and Paradiso presents unlimited scope, to the man of warm imagination and strong feeling, for the rewards and punishments of friends and foes. Not that we are to ascribe Dante's allocation of infernal penalties entirely to personal feeling. We must not forget that throughout the *Commœdia* he fancies himself the divinely appointed minister[5] of heaven's own decrees. His consecration by St. Peter, to which he alludes twice in the 24th and 25th Cantos of the *Paradiso*, is at least one source of the authoritative tone in which he pronounces the doom of the lost in the *Inferno*, as well as of his distribution of the trials and beatitudes in the remaining two sections of his work. The 24th Canto of the *Paradiso* has a

[1] The story is related in Boccaccio, *Vita*. Comp. Ozanam, *Dante et la phil. Cath. au XIII^e Siècle*, p. 131. Dante's fiery temper is also the subject of the 114th and 115th of Sacchetti's *Novelle*, Ed. Barbèra, pp. 454, 459.

[2] Boccaccio, *Vita*. Comp. *Il Convito*, iv. 14.

[3] Comp. Leigh Hunt, *Stories from the Italian Poets*, vol. i.

[4] Ozanam, Op. cit., chap. v., *Orthodoxie de Dante*.

[5] On this subject see Ugo Foscolo, *Discorso sul Testo*, etc. pp. 79–82.

special signification in its bearing on Dante's own belief. It purports to contain his examination on the Christian faith by St. Peter, previous to his consecration to the Laureate Apostleship of the Mediæval Church.[1] Dante's definition of faith in this important passage is rigidly ecclesiastical, involving the unconditional subordination of the reason. His own belief he announces as a good coin, as to whose mintage, 'image and superscription,' there could be no question.

'Ed io: Sì l' ho sì lucida, e sì tonda
Che nel suo conio nulla mi s' inforsa.'[2]

But there are other passages which intimate that Dante knew what philosophic doubt was. Indeed, with his comprehensive far-seeing intellectual vision, and his rare profundity of feeling, the absence of all trace of such an experience would have been nothing less than an anomaly. Thus, in the passage just quoted—having assigned as evidences of Christianity: 1. Bible Inspiration; 2. Supernatural miracles—when he is pressed by St. Peter on the latter point he rather evades it, and says that supposing Christianity had been promulgated without miracles, this single marvel would make all others needless.[3] In the 33rd Canto of the Purgatorio we have a still more noteworthy passage on this subject, in which the poet indicates that having long pursued for himself the path of philosophy, and finding it unsatisfactory for the noble reason of the lines:—

'Io veggio ben, che giammai non si sazia
Nostro 'ntelletto, se 'l ver non lo illustra'—

he at last has recourse to Beatrice and Religion, and on this authority is persuaded that the Divine transcends the human. Moreover, we have something like the assertion of twofold truth in the words of Beatrice herself, when she assures her lover that the appearance of heavenly justice, to mortal eyes, as injustice, was an argument of faith not of 'heretical pravity.'

'Parere ingiusta la nostra giustizia
Negli occhi di mortale, è argomento
Di fede, e non d' eretica nequizia.'[4]

In a similar spirit, she solves Dante's doubts as to the existence of evil, by limiting omnipotence:—

[1] Cf. Ugo Foscolo, loc. cit., and *Paradiso*, Canto xxiv. and xxv.

[2] *Par.*, Cant. xxiv. v. 86.

[3] *Par.*, Canto xxiv. Comp. *Essay on Augustine, Evenings with the Skeptics* (vol. ii.), who often employs the same argument.

[4] *Par.*, Canto iv. v. 67–69; and compare, on the passage, Bianchi's instructive note, *Commœdia*, p. 532.

'Voglia assoluta non consente al danno:
Ma consentevi intanto, in quanto teme
Se si ritræ, cadere in più affanno.'[1]

Dante is also aware that the intellect, even when it confines itself to discovered truth, is 'like a wild beast resting in its lair': a simile whose singular truth and pointedness are amply attested by our present skeptical investigations. Doubt, he philosophically remarks, is not an accidental but an inherent property of truth, springing up at its foot like a shoot from the trunk of a tree:—

'Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo
Appiè del vero il dubbio: ed è natura,
Ch' al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo.'[2]

and serves the same purpose of helping us to attain a higher position. Nor is he ignorant of the value of pure skeptical suspense, or of the influence of current opinion on human feeling in misleading the intellect:—

'Chè quegli è tra gli stolti bene abbasso
Che senza distinzione afferma o niega
Così nell' un, come nell' altro passo
Perch' egl' incontra, che più volte piega
L'opinion corrente in falsa parte
E poi l' affetto lo intelletto lega.'[3]

The cause of all erroneous conclusions, whether in philosophy or theology, he attributes to want of skill in the investigator:—

'Chi pesca per lo vero, e non ha l' arte.'[4]

Nevertheless, the final position of all truthful inquirers is not doubt, but actual or complete attainment. For he asserts that the intellect can and must attain truth; though his reason for the opinion is no stronger than the *à priori* one so often employed for the purpose:—

'. . . e giugner puollo
Se non, ciascun disio sarebbe *frustra*.'[5]

This realized certitude however is the lot only of Christian inquirers; it belongs only to the denizens of Paradise. On the other hand, prolonged doubt, unsatisfied desire, is a punishment of the

[1] *Par.*, Canto iv. v. 109.
[2] *Ibid*, v. 130.
[3] *Par.*, Canto xiii. v. 115, etc.
[4] *Ibid*, v. 123.
[5] *Par.*, Canto iv. v. 128.

Inferno, for the ancient heathens bewail their destiny in the plaintive words:—

'Che senza speme vivemo in disio.'[1]

The conception underlying this single verse is of itself enough to prove Dante's dogmatic bias; and his inability to regard unrealized aspiration and effort as anything but an *infernal* state. From this condition of eternal hopelessness, that befel Gentile truth-seekers, he takes occasion to urge on Christians passive acquiescence in dogma; and says that revelation was given in order to extinguish thirst for knowledge. His words are a confirmation of what I have already stated: that Dante had an experimental knowledge of doubt. They suggest that he had himself applied his reason to solve some of the speculative doctrines of the Church; and had been foiled in the attempt. On the subject of Dante's belief—the passage is one of the most-important in the *Commœdia*:—

'Matto è chi spera, che nostra ragione
Possa trascorrer la 'nfinita via,
Che tiene una Sustanzia in tre Persone
State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*
Chè se potuto aveste veder tutto
Mestier non era partorir Maria:
E disiar vedeste senza frutto
Tai, che sarebbe lor disio quetato
Ch' eternalmente è dato lor per lutto.'[2]

But the complete proof of this disposition, and of his animus against all heretics and doubters, must always be based on the terrible punishments he allots them. The principles on which these decisions are based are neither consistent nor clear. There seems a division between Dante's ecclesiastical prejudices and his human sympathies. On the one hand, the circle reserved for heretics and schismatics is one of the lowest in the Inferno.[3] The perpetual cleaving of these dividers of the truth, and especially the dichotomy of Mahomet, who is curiously regarded as a dissentient or apostate from the Christian faith,[4] is described with a particularity absolutely loathsome. Unbaptized infants are consigned to hell as remorselessly as by Augustine, though Dante does provide a *limbus*, an idea which the great

[1] *Inferno*, Canto iv. v. 42.
[2] *Purg.*, Canto iii. v. 34, etc.
[3] Canto xxviii.
[4] In one of the metrical chronicles of the eleventh century, Mahomet is styled a 'heresiarch more potent than Arius.' Cf. A. Bartoli, *Storia di Lett. Ital.*, i. p. 76. The conception of Mahomet as a schismatic is not however uncommon in the mediæval ages.

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Latin Father vehemently opposed.[1] The wisest and most virtuous heathen are located in the Inferno: in a limbus of which Bouterwek well remarked that it contains the 'best Society' of the whole *Divina Commœdia;* while the upper regions of the Paradiso have no worthier representatives of humanity than narrow-minded types of mediæval monkery, like SS. Dominic, Bernard and Peter Damianus. There is in most cases no distinction suggested between ethical and speculative error; the latter being awarded a punishment equal to that of the former. Arius and Sabellius are characterized in terms of severity that a Church Council or a bigoted Latin Father could hardly exceed.[2] No doubt Dante's mind was much exercised by the fate of those who are involuntarily ignorant of Christianity; but his final decision on the issue can hardly be styled either humane or Christian; for he lays it down that all those born after the coming of Christ are destined to hell.[3] An instructive example of the extent to which Dante was prepared to go on the side of sacerdotalism, and of his participation in some of the most mischievous conceptions of his time, is the retribution awarded to Vanni Fucci, which is assigned not so much on account of his crimes and bloodshed, as because he had robbed a sacristy![4]

But while Dante thus evinces, from his ecclesiastical standpoint, the narrow mind and restless temper of a grand inquisitor, there is another aspect of his character which reveals him as a humanist and hater of spiritual tyranny, at least when manifested in an excessive form. However capricious might appear some of the judgments of the *Inferno*, however personal others, there were many instances in which his decisions were approved by the popular conscience. That rapacious princes, and greedy and lustful prelates, should reap the reward of their ill-doings was a proposition no believer in the existence of Il Inferno was disposed to reject. The decrees of Minos and Rhadamanthus, as expounded by their poetic secretary, purported in many cases to rest on a purely moral basis. At least orthodoxy with all its claims was not regarded as an infallible preservative from infernal penalties; nor was non-Christianity an insuperable barrier

[1] The *limbus infantum* in the early Church was a receptacle to which the souls of unbaptized children were consigned, but in which they were supposed to suffer no misery. The Council of Carthage A.D. 418, under the influence of Augustine, condemned this doctrine, and deliberately proclaimed the Eternal perdition of all unbaptized infants. Cf. 'Essay on Augustin,' *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii. p. 200.

[2] See *Par.*, Canto xiii.

[3] *Par.*, Canto xix. On this subject comp. *Skeptics of the French Renaissance*, 'Essay on La Mothe le Vayer.'

[4] *Inferno*, Canto xxiv.

to the enjoyment of Paradise. So far the 'power of the keys' was implicitly denied. A spiritual sovereignty unable to preserve its own infallible chiefs from the penalties due to their misdeeds could scarcely be regarded, even by the unreflecting, as omnipotent in the distribution of the rewards and punishments of the world to come. Dante therefore gave a considerable impulse to the advance of human freedom, by causing Christianity to revert in some degree to its primary form; and insisting upon justice, well-doing and unselfishness from its chief ministers, who had impiously sought exemption from these duties in their official authority. The idea thus instilled into popular conceptions was no doubt germinative, and capable of large application to all the duties and relations in which men were conceived to stand to God.

ii. Nor, in view of the popularity so rapidly attained by the *Divina Commœdia*, were Dante's strictures on the unholy pretension of the Papacy to secular no less than spiritual sovereignty, unimportant. The opposite theory of a 'Holy Roman Empire' was, as we know, by no means new; but it was one thing to promulgate it in the court of a Barbarossa, or Louis of Bavaria, or to discuss it in learned treatises *De Monarchia*, written for the most part in Latin, but quite another to enounce it in popular rhymes. Hence such verses as:—

> 'Di' oggimai che la Chiesa di Roma
> Per confondere in sè duo reggimenti
> Cade nel fango, e sè brutta e la soma,'[1]

were pregnant with implications far in excess of their *prima facie* meaning. Those who questioned the one power might proceed further than Dante, and might ask themselves why they conceded the other, and the question would be the more hazardous since Rome had authoritatively based her twofold rule on the same indivisible foundation. So also his invective against the Church—his designation of her as the harlot of the Revelation[2]—would have the greater effect as emanating from one who regarded himself as a faithful son of the true spiritual Church.

iii. A further stimulus to intellectual emancipation must be adjudged to Dante's stress upon philosophy, or truth, as inherently divine. This is the glorious subject of his *Convito* which has been described as the 'First work on philosophy written in the Italian language.'[3] In developing this theme Dante is no doubt on the track of Christian Fathers and mediæval thinkers. But it was ad-

[1] *Purg.*, Canto xvi. v. 127.
[2] *Purg.*, Canto xxxii.
[3] Settembrini, *Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana*, i. 159.

vantageous to rescue the idea from the Latin tomes and dialectic forms of scholasticism, and assert it in popular form and language. Most important also—though beyond the scope of Dante's vision—was the promulgation of such teaching at the commencement of the era of modern science and inquiry, at a time when every new truth, no matter how demonstrable in itself or to what sphere of knowledge it pertained, was liable to be estimated, and either received or rejected, according to a standard of theological orthodoxy.

iv. That Dante entertained Protestant sympathies, and in this respect contributed to Free-thought, we have already seen. The precise extent of those sympathies must always remain a matter of doubt. The question itself has degenerated into a party issue between the rival religionists. Unduly exaggerated on the one side, it is just as unduly depreciated on the other. On this point Dante has been long destined to endure a dichotomy not dissimilar to that which he awards to some of the denizens of the Inferno. Romanists claim the greater share in his thought and sympathies; while this claim is contested and interpreted in their own favour by Protestants. The former lay stress on his expressions of reverence for the Church, for her ministers, her dogmas and her worship. The latter point to the doom of evil Popes—to his stress on the Bible as the main source of Christian truth—to his invective against the greed, lust and ambition—the parasitical growths of every system of sacerdotalism—to his preference for moral purity, as superior to religious rites. Weighing impartially the two sides we must I think conclude, as we have already done, that the preponderance is on the side of Protestantism. No one at least can dispute these three facts: 1. That Dante was irreconcilably opposed to the Romanism of the thirteenth century. 2. That a Reformed Romanism, such as he would have approved, would not have varied greatly from some types of Protestantism.[2] 3. That the general direction of his sympathies was indisputably towards Freedom, both spiritual and political.

v. An indirect but undoubted effect of the *Divina Commœdia*, especially of the *Inferno*, was to initiate those reflections on the

[1] Dante thus defines the mode in which all truth or philosophy is related to God. According to him Philosophy is 'amoroso uso di Sapienza, il quale massimamente è in Dio, perocchè in Lui è somma Sapienza, e sommo Amore, e sommo Atto,' *Convito*, iii. 12: Ed. Giuliani, p. 281. On the general question, comp. Giuliani's Excursus, *Della Filosofia del Convito di Dante*. *Convito*, p. 395. See also Settembrini's *Lezioni*, i. p. 160.

[2] On this point the author of the article 'Dante' in *Ersch und Grüber* remarks, 'Eine katholische Kirche, nach den Grundsätzen Dante's gebildet, würde auch der freisinnigste Protestant nichts ohne Ehrfurcht und Anerkennung betrachten.'

physical hell of mediæval theology which have since operated in undermining the belief among thoughtful Christians. The *Inferno* of Dante has thus ironically contributed to quench the material flames, and annihilate the physical tortures of the creed which gave them birth. The horrible realism of Dante's truly infernal pictures—the ruthless barbarity of his torments—the fiendish ingenuity, worthy of a familiar of the Inquisition, that could devise such a variety of inhuman punishments, the audacity that could resort to ideas of the most foul and loathsome description[1] in pursuit of its purpose—however congenial to the imperfect civilization, the materializing conceptions, the brutal passions of mediæval Italy, were destined to a rapid transformation in a milder and more humane age. Then the dogma of a material hell was at its climax of development; and the creations of the *Inferno*—overdrawn and over-coloured as we rightly consider them—were, so far from being coarser, in reality somewhat more refined than current descriptions of hell—those *e.g.* which formed the staple of the discourses of the preaching friars.[2] The ghastly daubs which still represent, to the lower classes of Italians, their conceptions of hell are inartistic delineations on canvas of themes and spectacles which in *Il Inferno* are set forth with eloquence of language and a vivid if grotesque imagination. Its immediate effect on the thought of the Renaissance is seen in the irony and ridicule to which the names and ideas of hell and purgatory were subjected by Boccaccio, Sacchetti, Pulci, Ariosto, and other Italian novelists and poets. The skeptical recoil from, and disdain of, such brutal exhibitions were not dissimilar to the reckless contempt and boisterous hilarity with which a public execution is generally witnessed by the unfeeling crowd. The details of the *Inferno* have often been compared with the descriptions in Milton's Hell. No doubt the extreme particularity and distinctness of the imagery of the former presents a striking contrast to the magnificent vagueness of the latter. It is generally agreed that the difference is partly owing to inherent dissimilarity in the structure of the imaginations of Dante and Milton, but I should also ascribe it, in a great measure, to a progressive sense of the fitness of modesty and reserve in describing the conditions of the world to come. Were any poet possessing a genius commensurate with the subject to take up once more the theme of *Il Inferno* we should expect a still further development of vagueness—imagery and accessories

[1] Comp. the well-known passage of W. S. Landor's *Pentameron*, commencing, 'The filthiness of some passages would disgrace the drunkenest horse-dealer,' etc., etc. *Works*, vol. ii. p. 307.

[2] Comp. A. Meray's most interesting work, *La Vie au temps des Libres Prêcheurs*, vol. i. p. 277 etc. Paris, 1878.

of a more directly supernatural kind—spiritual tortures described in suitable psychical terms. No other treatment would now be accepted as befitting the subject, for the reason that while the doctrine of future retribution still holds a place in the convictions of most Christians, the dogma of a material hell can no longer be said to exist.

vi. Dante's enormous and diversified erudition must also have had a wholesome and enlightening effect on an age when human learning was confined to the narrow groove of scholastic theology. With a knowledge of the schoolmen, and the Aristotelian doctors, whether Christian or Mahometan, he combined studies of a more distinctly modern cast. In his youth, we are told, he cultivated music and drawing, as well as poetry. So far as he could, he investigated natural science; as numerous passages of the *Divina Commœdia* serve to prove. His work *De Volgari Eloquio* shows a profound acquaintance with the various Italian and Provençal dialects of the thirteenth century; and reveals considerable philological capacity. He was not, any more than Petrarca, sufficiently acquainted with Greek to read Homer in the original; but some knowledge of the language he almost certainly possessed. He had also studied, like most of the Free-thinkers of the Renaissance, the Jewish Cabbala, and, as his *Vita Nuova* proves, was by no means devoid of the mysticism with which that study is allied. Add to these varied intellectual activities his political and historical studies, and we perceive that Dante was one of those omnivorous, omnipetent or all-seeking intellects whose capacities are limited not by their own defective amplitude so much as by the external bounds and conditions incidental to their working—one of those rare minds for which human knowledge is too little, and human life much too short.

vii. Besides the effects of Dante's writings we must, lastly, not omit to notice the impression wrought by his gigantic personality on the age in which he lived. The perfection of individual development may be likened to a gradual self-sculptured elevation through gradations of basso and alto-relievo, until the man—a completed statue—stands forth completely detached from the rude matrix in which he was embedded. This separate personality forms the common characteristic of all the leaders of the Renaissance. Mental and spiritual independence is the connecting link which joins together Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Pulci, Macchiavelli, Guicciardini and Pomponazzi. This was the quality by which they opposed, and gradually stood aloof from, mediævalism. They thus protested against the sacrifice of humanity, in its noblest representatives, to the supposed interests of effete systems in philosophy, religion and

politics. Dante was accustomed to boast that he was his own party;[1] and few boasts could claim fuller justification. His adhesion, such as it was, to mediæval Christianity and philosophy, was the deliberate reasoned conviction of the man himself. His dogma was in reality his own sole creation—his freedom, the space his own personal needs had devised. Even if those who lived in the contemplation of his magnificent isolation did not care either to share his dogma or remain content with his freedom, his own example, his sturdy self-assertion, might well animate them so to regulate their own convictions as to secure a still greater measure of religious and philosophical liberty.

Petrarca. Petrarca, however, not Dante, is the great representative of Italian humanism. If Dante is the prophet of the movement, combining the fearlessness and austerity of an Elijah with the eloquence and sublimity of an Isaiah, Petrarca is its first apostle—tender, passionate and profound like St. John. If the former foresees and heralds the new dawn, the latter basks and rejoices in its early sunshine. The different qualifications of the men, no less than their difference of environment, were admirably adapted to the parts they were respectively called to play in the regenerative movement of Europe. Dante was the thunder-peal that boded a breaking up of the long period of mediæval drought and barrenness—Petrarca was the rain that actually brought relief. While Dante's intellect was more gigantic and imposing, Petrarca's was more plastic, susceptible and expansive. While Dante's imagination was more powerful and intense, Petrarca's was more sympathetic and many-sided. Dante's learning, like his mind, was marked by massiveness, not devoid of pedantry or of a certain Cyclopæan grotesqueness of outline. Petrarca's was characterized by elegance, polish and refinement, with the addition of an appropriate vagueness of definition. In their writings, the one moves us like a Colossus, with his enormous dimensions and superhuman majesty, the other affects us like a shapely statue of Apollo, with his graceful form and exquisite proportions. Dante, moreover, was a dogmatist who clung tenaciously to beliefs and superstitions of the dark ages; while Petrarca was a child of the new world, full of its fresher aspirations, and prepared to substitute culture and a tender nature-worship for much of what was then current as Christianity. Dante's mind had most of the qualities of an Ecclesiastic—an austere St. Dominic, for instance—Petrarca was a genuine philosopher and freethinker. The former venerated as his classical

[1] 'Parte per se stesso.' *Par.*, Canto. xvii. The phrase is not to be limited as it is by some writers (Comp. Bouterwek, *Gesch. der Poesie*, i. p. 80) to his political position.

model the conservative Virgil, the latter took for his guiding genius the eclectic and Academic skeptic, Cicero.

Of late years Petrarca has received renewed attention at the hands of his fellow-countrymen, thanks to the celebration of his fifth centenary in 1874, as well as to the general revival of interest in her mediæval thinkers which marks the literature of Italy in the present day. The result has been to enlarge our knowledge respecting him, and to increase his reputation as a thinker and philosopher.

Born in 1304—seventeen years before the death of Dante—Petrarca's youth is distinguished by the precocious development of his powers and his enthusiasm for classical studies. His father wished to bring him up to his own profession of the law; but his designs were frustrated by the zest with which his son devoured the poets and philosophers of antiquity. At an early age he was sent to the University of Montpellier, where he remained four years. From thence he went to Bologna to complete his studies in jurisprudence. Altogether seven years were thus employed in his legal education—years which he afterwards said were 'altogether lost, not spent.' He contrived, however, at both universities, to snatch some precious moments from his irksome studies to devote to Cicero and the Latin Poets. His father, despairing of his success in his profession so long as his mind was so fully concentrated on ancient literature, once threw a number of his classical books into the fire; but was so touched by his cries and entreaties that he snatched a few of them from the flames and restored them to the weeping youth. The death of his father, when he was twenty-two years of age, left him at liberty to pursue what was clearly the calling of his life. He returned to Avignon; where, finding that the paternal property did not suffice for a livelihood, he received the tonsure, and thus became eligible for ecclesiastical preferment, though he never took orders.

Devoting himself to literature and poetry, Petrarca soon began to acquire renown. This was largely facilitated by the residence, at that time, of the Papal Court at Avignon, and the intercourse thereby afforded with so many distinguished persons, who crowded to it from every country in Europe. The interchange of thought with men of so many different opinions and sympathies served the double purpose of enlarging the range of his intellect and imagination, and of confirming the free direction of his studies, so happily begun by the thoughtful perusal of Cicero. Hence, although Petrarca treats everything belonging to Avignon with the greatest contumely and disdain, there is no doubt that he was largely indebted to the mental excita-

[1] Comp. Mézieres, *Pétrarque*, p. 7.

tion it served to create, for the formation of the enlightened views and liberal sympathies which afterwards distinguished him. Not the least of these awakening agencies was the insight his residence at Avignon afforded into the corruption of the Romish Church; while from its geographical position the city still cherished fond reminiscences of the Troubadours and Provençal poetry, and thus possessed affinities with the chief popular literature of the time. His own sonnets are, to a great extent, polished echoes and reproductions of the old poems of chivalry; and so far he may be called a successor of the Trouvères and Troubadours.[1]

But Petrarca did not draw all his literary impulses from Avignon. He traversed Italy, France and Spain in search of MSS. of the classics, as well as employed all his friends in the same work. Many MSS. he transcribed with his own hand; and his industry in the acquisition of these treasures was second only to the prodigious activity of Poggio Bracciolini. His zeal was rewarded with merited success. He was enabled to form a goodly collection of classical works; and his eager quest brought him into contact with all the illustrious students and patrons of the new learning of his time.

Petrarca's training and pursuits admirably qualified him for the position he has so long held as the chief Humanist of the Renaissance. His distinguishing merit, and his principal contribution to Italian Free-thought, consists in his separation from, and hostility to, scholasticism. He is clear-sighted enough to discern, and sufficiently enlightened to welcome, the new intellectual and spiritual light dawning over Europe. To him mediævalism is, without qualification—'the dark ages.' He is hostile to it both as an intellectual and as a religious system. He detests its ignorance, its pedantry, its dogma, its tyranny and its superstition. The commencement of this free aspiration we must assign to his study of Cicero; who seems to have produced the same quickening influence on his mind as he did on that of Augustine. Burckhardt has well observed the effect of Cicero's popularity during the Renaissance as an eclectic and partially skeptical thinker. This influence he shares with the Platonic dialogues a little later on; so that Cicero and Sokrates may be called the chief connecting links that joined the skepticism of ancient Greece and Rome with its revival in modern Europe. In the case of Petrarca, his artistic sympathies seem to have been first attracted by Cicero's style, before his understanding was captivated by his philo-

[1] Petrarca's indebtedness to the Troubadours for qualities of style, metre and exaggerated sentiment is now generally admitted. The latest and fullest treatment of this subject is Prof. A. Bartoli's chapter, 'Il Petrarca è I Trovatori' in his *I Primi due Secoli della Letteratura Italiana*, p. 538.

sophy. When he grew able to appreciate the latter, he discovered a range of thought and a freedom of treatment which served him in good stead in his attack on mediæval philosophy.

Scholasticism was a method and a system. Professing to be based on dialectical processes, it nullified its profession by the arbitrary assumption of numberless first principles which it regarded as infallible. Thus the dialectic form, which was an advantage to the strong and independent thinker, as supplying a method and standpoint in human reason which he would use without restriction, was a snare to the weaker mind, as it presumed on an infallible basis of logic which in reality had no existence. The freer aspects of scholasticism, by means of its stress on logic, we have already investigated. Petrarca was unable to perceive that it had any. The massive tomes of the school philosophy were to him a heap of chaff in which he could not find a single grain of truth or freedom. The universities where they were taught—in other words all in Europe—were disseminators of ignorance and dungeons of Free-thought. He reproaches the scholastic teachers, as Plato did the Sophists, with prostituting their talents.[1] Like cunning hierophants they affected a mystery and profundity which was, very largely, only the creation of their own interested selfishness. Dialectic, the basis of scholasticism, seems to him a puerile employment, utterly useless in the ordinary concerns of life. The only utility any thinking man would ascribe to it is as a kind of mental gymnastic. As such it may be useful for children, but an old syllogism-monger is ridiculous. Furthermore, dialectic can only be a means, it can never be the sole end, of intellectual effort, which it is the object of scholasticism to make it. The aim of scholasticism is to render its disciples able disputants, not to teach them real knowledge. Hence he ridicules the rewards which attach to these controversialists; the degrees, *e.g.* of Doctor and Master, which by pompous insignia and empty ceremony transform a man from a blockhead to a full-blown philosopher.[2] He describes the ceremony of degree-conferring, or rather the exercise attending it, in

[1] Comp. Voigt, *Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, p. 38.

[2] This was a frequent subject of satirical invective with the satirists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Barclay, *e.g.* in his *Shyppe of Fooles*, ridicules those who

> 'Lesynge theyr tyme at the unyversyte
> Yet count they themselfe of great auctoryte
> With theyr proude hodes on theyr neckes hangynge,
> They haue the lawde; but other haue the cunnynge.
>
> They thynke that they have all scyence perfytely
> Within theyr hertes bostynge them of the same,

the following amusing terms:—'The silly youth arrives at the hall. His teachers announce and celebrate him. Neighbours and friends praise him. When bidden he mounts the rostrum, looking down on all things from thence as from a great height, and murmuring I know not what confused matter. Whereupon his elders, vying with each other, exalt him to heaven as if he had spoken divine things. Meanwhile bells ring and trumpets blare. Kisses are bestowed on him. The round cap is placed on his head, the black gown on his back. When these ceremonies are completed, he comes down a wise man who went up a fool—truly a marvellous metamorphosis—though unknown to Ovid.'[1]

But scholasticism is not only hurtful as teaching and rewarding disputation and fostering the pride of ignorance. The system itself is narrow. Petrarca's conception of culture is indeed as broad and inclusive as was the knowledge of his time. The wise man for him is not the school theologian, but the student of history, the philosopher, the poet, the theologian—all embodied in the same personality. Every faculty of man should be cultivated, every science acquired; but the attitude of men towards knowledge ought not to be that of finders but of seekers, not of professors but of humble disciples.[2] There is but one universal science worthy the pursuit of all men—viz. truth and virtue.[3] For the purposes of this dual object, he reproaches the sciences of his time with being useless; just as Agrippa, two centuries after, accuses all sciences of being false. There is indeed a slight soupçon of narrowness in the extreme utilitarianism which he makes the end of every science. The philosophers, he says, search for the origin of all things, and know not that God is their Creator. They describe the virtues, but do not practise them. The theologians are transformed into logicians, if not to Sophists. They will not be loving children, but knowers of God. 'These men,' he says in another place, 'dispute about the secrets of Nature, just as if they had come down from heaven and shared the counsel of the Omnipotent, forgetting what is written, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor."'[4]

In his perpetual reproach of scholasticism as busying itself with

> Though they therto theyr mynde dyd neuer aply;
> Without the thynge, they joy them of the name.'
>
> *Of unprofytable study.*

[1] Op. om., Basle (1581), tom. i., p. 10. Comp. Mézières, *Pétrarque* p. 361. Voigt, *Wiederbelebung*, p. 38.

[2] Voigt, Op. cit., p. 39.

[3] *Epistolæ rer. Sen.*, xii. 2.

[4] Comp. F. Fiorentino, *Scritti Varii*, p. 109, etc.

questions quite apart from the ordinary interests of humanity, Petrarca no doubt hit on its main defect, now becoming more and more palpable to the Free-thinkers of the Renaissance. What possible connexion they asked could exist between the disputes on Realism and Nominalism, or the controversies that divided Scotists and Thomists, and the common needs and facts of man's daily life. What relation did they bear to the cause of 'Truth and virtue.' Not only were they useless; they were mischievous and perverting, inasmuch as the energy devoted to the solution of inscrutable riddles and the interpretation of incomprehensible dogmas, might have been devoted to objects that came nearer to useful knowledge and bore more directly on morality. As it was, the intellects of the best men of the age were frittered away and wasted in pursuits far removed from the domain of human life and action. Mediævalism stood like a gigantic primæval temple raised by Cyclopæan hands, and possessing the attributes of a bygone age; but utterly out of harmony with the smaller and more useful erections which were beginning to rise around it on every side. Petrarca, to his imperishable fame, called attention to the incongruity; nay more, he commenced the undermining operations necessary to its overthrow.

Petrarca, however, was not content with attacking scholasticism as a general system. He boldly came to particular names and authorities. Half of the success of his attack is due to this fact. He knew the superstitious reverence of the latter half of the middle ages for Aristotle. In Petrarca's time much of this reverence was transferred to Averroes, his great expounder: 'che 'l gran comento feo,' as Dante labels him. These two idols of the schools in his time Petrarca attacked at first with caution, but afterwards with fearlessness and unreserve. He is therefore a predecessor of Pomponazzi; though his standpoint is that of a general free-thinker, while Pomponazzi is a philosophical skeptic. He dared to say that after all Aristotle was only a man, and did not know everything—a proposition which, however reasonable to us, has been rightly characterized by Professor Mézières as 'une parole mémorable, la plus hardie peut-être qu'ait entendue le moyen âge.'[1] The mere breath of suspicion against the infallibility of the Stagirite was at that time a dictum of heterodoxy equivalent to, if not exceeding, the open denial of a fundamental article of the Christian faith. To Aristotle Petrarca opposed, as an authority, Plato; but for no other reason than the high fame he had always maintained in the Christian Church. The relative merits of Aristotle

[1] *Pétrarque*, p. 362.

and Plato were not presented to the Italian mind in a definite form until the next century.

We thus perceive that Petrarca adopted against the gigantic fabric of mediæval dogma—the centre of intellectual and spiritual authority of his age—a position of free and independent criticism, which goes far to justify the title bestowed on him of 'the father of modern criticism.'[1] The very restlessness of his intellect, and the comprehensiveness of its range, make criticism and dissidence the natural discharge of its functional activity. Not only did he analyse, question, and dissent from writers and authorities with whom he had little sympathy, but he subjected his own intimate favourites, Virgil and Cicero, to the same treatment.[2] The only basis of such fearless independence, and its sole outcome, is a protest against all authority *ab extra*, no matter from what source emanating, or to what prescriptive rights appealing. Petrarca declares—a momentous declaration at that time—the inalienable right of the individual reason to examine, test and determine the nature and quality of every truth presenting itself for adoption. In other words he is a free-thinker; and to a considerable extent a skeptic. That this was really Petrarca's position we shall see more fully further on.

But Petrarca's quarrel was not only with mediæval philosophy; it also included mediæval Christianity. They were indeed indivisible, for scholasticism was merely the literary and philosophical form mediæval religion had assumed. His early life at Avignon disclosed to him the corruption of the Papal Court then in residence there, and he records his experience in vivid and imperishable characters, both in his Latin and Italian Poems.[3] This first impression was more than confirmed by what he saw of Romanism in his travels, and by his later acquaintance with it at Rome. The capital of Western Christendom he addresses in tones which recal the denunciations of a Hebrew Prophet, or the writer of the Apocalypse. In two of his sonnets[4] he apostrophises it as 'The Greedy Babylon':—

'Fontana di dolore, albergo d' ira,
Scola d' errori, e tempio d' eresia.'

This description of Rome as the 'School of errors and the temple of heresy,' incidentally throws, I may observe, a curious but not insigni-

[1] Mézières, Op. cit., p. 362.

[2] Mézières, *Pétrarque*, p. 371. Comp. Dr. Koerting's *Petrarca's Leben und Werke*, p. 511.

[3] See Eclogues vi. and vii. Op., Basle, vol. iii. pp. 14 and 15: and the 14th of his Miscellaneous Sonnets.

[4] *Rime* Ed. Padova, ii. pp. 273, 274.

ficant light on Petrarca's estimate of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. His literary fame also served to bring him into contact with leading ecclesiastics, whom he found, as a class, devoted to luxury, idleness, and ambition, not to godliness and sound learning. The lower orders of clergy added to debauchery, and grosser forms of vice, an ignorance and superstition almost surpassing belief. Petrarca's refined manners and learned tastes recoiled from men whose occupations, ideas and sympathies were so utterly opposed to his own. His studies of the early Christian Fathers, especially Lactantius and Augustine, soon disclosed the difference between the Papal Christianity of the fourteenth century, and the purity of the primitive Church, cradled in poverty:—

'Fondata in casta ed umil povertate.'

Like Dante and other humanists, he finds in Constantine's donation, that 'fatal marriage-dower,'[1] the source of most of its after ambition and corruption. In this clear recognition of wealth and inordinate power as disastrous to the true objects of Christianity, Petrarca partook of those views which afterwards found their climax in the Reformation. But he was also impelled in the same direction by his 'Monarchical' sympathies, and his faith in the universal sovereignty of the Holy Roman Empire. By aiming at secular power, the Papacy had encroached on a jurisdiction as divine as that of its own spiritual authority. Added to these feelings, as partly suggesting, partly corroborating them, was the modification of Romanist Christianity, produced by his classical studies. Cicero and Virgil were not only superior to the Church Fathers in Latinity, in learning, in intellectual sympathy, in general culture, but they were also superior to most of them in religion and morality. That Cicero, *e.g.* was not a Christian, so far as formal profession and outward worship were concerned, could not be denied. But Petrarca, with Boccaccio and other humanists, had attained a somewhat loftier standpoint than that which estimated a man's faith by external adherence to specific creeds and dogmas. Regarding his spirit, the general tone of his writings, and his professedly high moral principle,[2] Petrarca pronounced Cicero a virtual Christian; a man of instincts and tendencies so allied to Christianity that he must infallibly have been a Christian had he come in contact with the teachings of Christ. Nor was Cicero the only writer of antiquity for whom Petrarca's broad culture

[1] Comp. Dante, *Inferno*, Canto xix.

[2] Burckhardt has pointed out that with all his enthusiasm for Cicero, Petrarca was fully alive to the imperfections of his character both as a man and as a statesman. *Cultur d. Renaissance*, vol. i. p. 294 and Note.

and liberal sympathies were concerned. He displays almost equal interest in Virgil (Plato, whom he read in Latin), Seneca, Lucan, Ovid; in a word for all poets and prose writers whose Latinity and morals were in his opinion irreproachable. Had Petrarca planned, like his great predecessor, a Divina Commedia, the occupants of the Inferno and Paradiso would undoubtedly have been compelled to change places. Cicero and Virgil, Sokrates and Plato, would have been assigned to the higher regions of the Paradiso, instead of monkish obscurantists like Dominic and Damianus. Petrarca, however, did not oppose the dogmas of Christianity. He had not the slightest desire to enact the rôle of a reformer, either within or without the Church. When, therefore, by going back to Christian antiquity and the apostolic age he was able to tone down the excessive pretensions of Romanism to a measure more in harmony with his judgment, he was content to accept the result as the true Christianity of his allegiance, and to ignore the dogmatic extravagances of its Papal development. Nevertheless he was not prepared to sanction the open ridicule which the disciples of Averroes sometimes levelled at Christianity, and at its great doctors, Paul and Augustine. He resolutely defended his religion from these narrow-minded dogmatists, and an anecdote is recorded of his forcible ejection of one of them from his house. Vogt[1] rightly remarks on this that Petrarca's defence of Christianity from Averroists is not in the interest of ecclesiastical Christianity but of his own.[2] This is true; but his feeling to Averroes is not only a question of religion, it is also one of general culture. Averroism represented to him a blind, pedantic, self-conceited philosophy, to which he opposes Christianity as a system based on humility and conscious ignorance, and as a cultus which placed ethical practice above speculation. On this point Petrarca shares largely the same skeptical aspect of the Christian faith which impressed itself on other Christian skeptics, such as Huet, Le Vayer, and Pascal—I mean its insistence on humility and self-distrust, aud its opposition to intellectual and spiritual pride. Petrarca's relation to the dogmas of the Church, and conversely their mode of presentation to his intellect, is instinctively shown by his proofs of immortality. The grounds he assigns for believing it are not drawn from the Bible, or from the creeds of the Church, or from the testimonies of Christian writers, but exclu-

[1] Comp. Vogt, Op. cit., p. 53. This incident is naturally made much of by writers anxious to prove Petrarca's complete orthodoxy. Cf. *e.g.* Cæsar Cantu, *Gli eretici d' Italia*, vol. i. p. 176.

[2] Vogt., Op. cit., p. 57.

sively from classical authors. He relies especially on the 'Scipio's Dream' of Cicero, and other scattered intimations collected from his writings; and also adduces the *Phædo* of Plato.[1] This was no doubt the point of view from which he contemplated all Christian truths. He saw them through the medium of classical learning, and valued them in proportion as their presentation by the Church harmonized with that medium. A dogma so exclusively Christian as to have no similarity or connexion, direct or indirect, with heathen thought, he would have estimated at a very low price. Thus, without any formal development, perhaps with only a partial realization of the outcome of his own thoughts and aspirations, Petrarca regarded Christianity, or in point of fact, Religion, as essentially *culture*. As his latest biographer remarks, he was first a Pagan philosopher, only secondly a Christian.[2] Whatever be the inherent defects of this conception, especially as interpreted by disciples of Petrarca and other still more extreme humanists,[3] it cannot be said that it was either unjustifiable or untimely. When the Papacy had developed a Christianity from which liberal culture had been completely eliminated, it was not very wonderful that Humanism should propagate a culture in which Christianity was somewhat in danger of being lost. Petrarca, notwithstanding classical predilections, was not likely to forget religion as an essential part of the highest culture. But his Church was much more Catholic than that of Rome. His generous sympathies comprehended in the bounds of one indivisible community all men who appealed to his sense of intellectual and moral worth. So far from orthodoxy, in the ecclesiastical sense of the term, being an important, still less an exclusive title to human reverence, he would not have exchanged a page of Cicero for all the ecclesiastical writers he knew, with the exception perhaps of Augustine. Nor, with his strong feeling for truth as apart from doctrines and creeds, was he able to perceive the distinction between the inspiration claimed by sacred writers and Church councils, and the unclaimed *afflatus* of ancient heathen moralists. To him Cicero was as inspired as Augustine, and Seneca was on the same level with St. Paul, when uttering the self-same truths. Hence, in most of his works, heathen authors are quoted side by side with the foremost names in Christian literature, without the slightest perception of any difference existing either in the religious or literary status of the various authorities. This eclecticism we shall often have occasion to notice as a characteristic

[1] Comp. Burckhardt, *Cultur d. Renaissance*, ii. p. 317.
[2] Dr. Koerting, Op. cit., p. 562.
[3] Comp., Voigt, Op. cit., p. 58.

of our free-thinkers. Its ripest and most unreserved exponent is found among French Skeptics—*viz.* Bishop Huet of Avranches.

Petrarca's skeptical attitude to the beliefs of his time is not confined to Philosophy and Religion. Here his battle had been with the universities and the Church—in other words, with the highest speculation, and the most accredited erudition, of the age. But he extends the same critical incisive method to popular beliefs in their most seductive form of superstitions. He opposes the generally current and deeply rooted faith of the time in the supernatural, as manifested by astrology, alchymy, miracles, dæmoniac possession, prodigies, auguries, dreams, presentiments. It is easy to conceive that this direction of his skepticism, though more obvious and natural to us, may have been far more difficult and dangerous to Petrarca; and involved therefore more courage on his part, than his attacks on philosophy and theology. The supposed dangerous effect of Free-thought is not always tested by the inherent worth or dignity of the particular doctrine held to be impugned. Superstitions relating to material objects lie nearer to the affections of the vulgar than abstract beliefs; and their faith, such as it is, is more undermined by the attempted removal of the former than by open denial of the latter. To the Neapolitan peasant the blood of Januarius is a closer and more venerated object of faith than Deity, and he would be more profoundly affected by its non-liquefaction than by the most triumphant and convincing demonstration of atheism. And, coming nearer home, thousands of Christians having some claim to be called civilized, regard with more reverence the supposed bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist than His spiritual life in humanity or history. Petrarca, in opposing the superstitions, was really attacking the science of his time. Astrologers were then held in the highest repute. They were courted by kings and princes, they occupied the chairs and received the endowments of learned universities. Though regarded by the Church with an eye of suspicion, as rival hierophants and aspirants for fame and wealth, there were too many points of connexion between their science and mediæval Christianity to permit the latter openly to oppose them. Nor, by suggesting the agency of dæmons to account for the supposed success of diviners and astrologers, could the Church be said to further the cause of enlightenment, unless on the principle of the Italian proverb that 'the greater devil always casts out the less.' Against these superstitions, allied with so many powerful interests, Petrarca pleads with spirit and boldness. He points out that knowledge of the future is impossible, and if possible would be embarrassing. He reiterates Cicero's sarcasm, that a generally truthful man for a single falsehood is re-

puted a liar, while an astrologer, though an habitual liar, is for a single chance coincidence reckoned a prophet.[1]

In his contest with superstitions Petrarca is not supported, as in his warfare with mediæval philosophy, by the unanimous consensus of antiquity. No doubt his favourites, Cicero and Augustine, are on his side as against astrologers; but on the other hand many of the Latin writers whom he valued were opposed to him on this and kindred subjects. Livy, *e.g.* was quite a repository of marvellous prodigies, which however Petrarca declined to accept on his authority. The same principle of enlightened rationalism Petrarca applies to dreams and presentiments. That dreams are occasionally fulfilled is just as little wonderful, and for the same reason, as that a diviner's prediction happens to turn out correct. As a crowning proof of the worthlessness of stellar vaticination, he instances the example of a court astrologer of Milan, who in an argument with Petrarca fully assented to his skepticism on the subject, but pleaded the necessity of his art as a means of getting a livelihood.[2]

The boundary line between astrology and medicine, in the fourteenth century, was not broad. As a rule the disciple of Æsculapius also cast nativities; and his crucibles and vessels for compounding chemicals were further employed for purposes of alchymy. According to Petrarca both were different branches of a common charlatanism. With medicine indeed his feud is of a peculiarly violent character. He wrote to Pope Clement VI. when he was ill, bidding him beware of his doctors. The Pope's medical attendant, not relishing the intrusion of a layman into the sacred precincts of his profession, wrote a bitter Epistle to Petrarca, who replied in Four Books of *In Medicum quendam Invectivarum*, of the tone of which Tiraboschi satirically remarks,[3] that 'he cannot propound it as a model of philosophical moderation.' Many reasons may be assigned for Petrarca's animosity on this subject. Medicine and anatomy, like all other branches of natural science, were then in the hands of the Arabs, and Petrarca had no higher opinion of the physical science than he had of the metaphysics of the co-religionaries of Averroes and Avicenna. His prejudice in this matter was not however justified by the sound judgment which directed his hostility to astrology; for in Medicine, as in other cognate subjects, Arab learning was far in

[1] Comp. *Ep. rer. fam.*, iii., Ep. 8. *Opera* (Basle), ii. p. 611. See also Tiraboschi, *Storia*, etc., vol. v. pt. i. p. 361.

[2] Comp. *De Remed. Utri. Fort.*, lib. I., Dial. 112. *Senil.*, lib. I., Ep. 6, and particularly his letter to Boccaccio, *Senil.* III. Ep. 1, *Opera*, ii., p. 768.

[3] *Storia*, etc., vol. v. pt. i. p. 362. For the treatise itself see the Latin works (Ed. Basle), p. 1081.

advance of that of Christian Europe.[1] But the extent of his prejudice is strikingly shown by the fact of his excepting Greek and Roman medicine from his classical sympathies. Of the curative methods of Hippokrates, he pleaded, men were ignorant, and in Galen he placed no faith; and even if the doctors of medicine in the fourteenth century knew the methods of Hippokrates, the knowledge would not have availed them, for the Greek physician practised in another land and on men of a different race. . . .

Another reason of Petrarca's animosity against medicine was its methods. Frequently these were based upon irrational dogmas and subjective fancies. Its professors, though really empirics, assumed a superciliousness of manner and an infallibility of self-assertion against which our free-thinker recalcitrated. In an amusing letter to Boccaccio[2] he ridicules the vanity and solemn pomposity of the medical men of his time—their purple robes, their rings studded with precious stones, their gilt spurs and other costly gear. He sarcastically says, that they only wanted a little of a rightful claim to the honour of a triumph like a Roman conqueror, for probably there were few among them who could boast of having slain five thousand men; but what they wanted in number they compensated by the quality of the slaughtered; for they slew not enemies but fellow-citizens, and civilians, not soldiers cased in armour. We find Petrarca's prejudice against the medical profession expressed in similar invectives, by Cornelius Agrippa and Montaigne; and the same feeling is shared by most of our free-thinkers down to the time of Molière. Probably there was quite enough dogmatic arrogance, combined with a real ignorance of their calling, to justify much of this feeling. As Petrarca distrusted medicine, he took care to avoid it. Like Molière, he attributed his generally vigorous health to direct opposition to the prescriptions and rules of the faculty. He records various ludicrous instances of medical fallibility, one of which happened in his own case. Being at one time ill, his medical attendant professed to find his illness severe, and ventured on the unfavourable prognosis that he would die about midnight. Petrarca gleefully describes the disgust of the worthy medicus, when, paying his moribund patient a visit next morning, he found him seated comfortably, and hard at work, at his writing-desk.

To jurisprudence, as another branch of mediæval learning, Petrarca was unfavourably inclined. The peculiar tone of irritation in which

[1] On this subject of the contribution of the Arabs to the science of medicine, comp. Sédillot, *Histoire Générale des Arabes*, vol. ii. p. 72, etc., and the exhaustive work of Dr. L. Leclerc, *Histoire de la Médecine Arabe*, 2 vols. Paris, 1876.

[2] *Senil.*, lib. v. Ep. 4. Comp. Tiraboschi, v. pt. i. p. 363.

he refers to the subject seems to prove that he never forgot those painful studies at Montpellier and Bologna, when he was compelled to put aside Cicero and Virgil for Justinian and the Decretals. But his animadversions against legal studies are really aimed not so much against themselves, considered from a philosophical point of view, as against their misuse by unscrupulous practitioners and pedantic professors. His own ideas of jurisprudence were derived from the ancient philosophers; and certainly were more in harmony with his high estimate of individual freedom than the heterogeneous and complex codes generally in force in Italy.

The common centre in which these various propulsions and repulsions converge is clear. They mark the humanist, the independent free-thinker, whose instincts and efforts are radically opposed to the imaginary erudition and real restrictions of his age. They constitute the intellectual aspects of that general affinity for freedom, which he manifested, politically, in his regard for Rienzi, and his approbation of his ill-fated enterprises. At the same time, if we possessed nothing more than the indirect evidence of these various tendencies, the precise determination of Petrarca's skepticism would have been difficult. The very completeness of natures like his renders a simple straightforward estimate of their intellectual conclusions impossible. Not only his intellect, keen, eager, and comprehensive, but his sentiment and imagination, tender, susceptible and profound, had to be consulted in his determination of truth. The conflict between these rival tendencies is often perceptible in his works. What the skeptical reason abstracts is returned again in the feeling; and on the other hand the definition which is lost in the vague tenderness of emotion is replaced by shrewd, clear intellectualism. But the issue of the conflict—the nature of his skeptical conclusions—is not doubtful in Petrarca's case. We are not left to the hazard of indirect evidence. In more than one passage of his works, he admits, accounts for, and defends his skeptical position. Here, *e.g.* is a remarkable passage from his letters. 'I am not a frequenter of the schools, but of the woods; a solitary wanderer, careless of sects but greedy of truth. Distrustful of my own faculties, lest I should be involved in errors, I embrace doubt itself as truth. I have thus gradually become an Academic; to myself ascribing nothing, affirming nothing, and doubting all things excepting those in which doubt is sacrilege.'[1] A fuller confession of unfaith we could scarcely

[1] 'Non scholasticus quidem sum; sed silvicola, solivagus . . . sectarum negligens, veri appetens. . . . Sæpe diffidens mei ne erroribus implicer, dubitationem ipsam pro veritate amplector. Ita sensim Academicus evasi, nil

expect from a man of Petrarca's sentiments, philosophical and religious. His doubt is explicit and comprehensive. His adoption of suspense, for truth, assimilates him to the most pronounced Greek skeptics. Even the exception of the last clause loses much of its weight when we remember the nature of his Christianity. The sacrilege he feared was a violation of his own conscience, not of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. We must not, however, attribute to Petrarca a preference for doubt, or suspense, considered as an end in itself, except when the principle of activity or energy is left in it, and it becomes, as in the case of Sokrates and others, a stimulus to inquiry.[1] In other cases he regards it not from an absolute but from a relative point of view. Ignorance was his armour against the omniscience of scholasticism and the dogmatism of the Church, just as it was that of Sokrates from the sciolists and obscurantists of Athens. 'In many things,' says Petrarca, speaking of the vaunted wisdom of the schools, 'Ignorance is the highest knowledge—the commencement of all science.' We have already noticed how even the secular science of his time was tainted with the assumed infallibility derived from association with the Church. How Popes and priests, schoolmen and professors, magicians and diviners, astrologists and alchymists vied with each other in the assumption of universal and indisputable knowledge. With his wider insight and profounder studies, this arrogance irritated Petrarca. His encomium of ignorance, as opposed to this proud science, is contained in his work, *Of his own Ignorance and that of many others*, one of the most noteworthy of his writings. This work was occasioned by the following incident. Petrarca has been criticised by a jury of friends. After an impartial investigation, they concede to him certain advantages, great renown, influential patrons, and other blessings of various kinds, but their final verdict is that 'Though a good man, he is very ignorant.'[2] Petrarca accepts the judgment in good part. Sokrates himself could hardly have been more pleased when the Delphic oracle commended his nescience. Nevertheless Petrarca takes occasion to examine the pretended knowledge, not only of his judges, but of other dogmatists as well. The result is a conviction that his own ignorance, which he admits to be profound, is largely shared by his fellow men. His superiority to others is Sokratic, and consists in the recognition of a truth to which they are blind. Besides, the verdict of his friends is further correct, for it describes the aim of his whole life, which is to be virtuous

mihi tribuens, nil affirmans, dubitansque de singulis nisi de quibus dubitare sacrilegium reor.'—*Ep. Rerum Senil.*, I., Ep. 5, Op., tom. ii. p. 745.

[1] Comp. *De Remed: Utri. Fort.*, I., Dial. 12, Op. 1, p. 9.

[2] Scilicet me sine literis virum bonum.—Op., vol. ii. p. 1039.

rather than wise.[1] And here we touch upon another of those principles of Petrarca's character which engendered, and which he employs to compensate for, his advocacy of Free-thought. Besides recognizing search for wisdom as noble in itself, he points out the superiority of action to speculation, of virtue to learning. Whatever may be said of this theme, when examined closely by his own life and predilections, few subjects in his works are treated more effusively. No doubt the lesson, besides being common to most thinkers of a destructive type, was then needed with a peculiar urgency. Scholastic philosophy and ecclesiastical orthodoxy both insisted on the priority of doctrine over practice. The whole progress of mediæval thought had been in this direction. 'Believe as we tell you,' said the clergy, 'that is all that is necessary.' 'Receive our axioms and ratiocinations,' said the schoolman, 'and you will then attain wisdom.' 'Not so,' rejoined Petrarca. 'Wisdom is not to be found in speculation, whether of the Church or the schools. It consists in the cultivation of virtue, in the practical discharge of duties to God and man. Speculation is often deceived. It is as manifold in quality as philosophers are many in number. It tends to create skepticism. On the other hand virtue and holiness are liable to none of these doubts and vacillations. Whatever else is uncertain, their intrinsic excellence is assured. They are ultimate certainties, independent of all human judgments and opinions. It cannot be denied that Petrarca is here a true precursor of the Reformation, one who would fain have restored to the Christian Church the original law of its Founder.

But there is another aspect of Petrarca's skepticism, as there is another and most important side to his character; for he is not only a philosopher, and a rationalist, but also a mystic, and an ascetic. While, therefore, in his former capacity, he takes refuge from intellectual puzzles by adopting a position of confessed ignorance, he manifests, as a mystic, his restless tendencies, by contrasting all the conceivable antagonisms which pertain to the lot of humanity. He is thus possessed with that antithetical equilibrating instinct which marks so many free-thinkers; and which, when fully developed, results in the intellectual deadlock of two-fold truth. The work which he devotes to this subject is entitled *De remediis utriusque Fortunæ*. It reflects clearly, as Professor Bartoli remarks, 'the perpetual antitheses between which the mind of the writer fluctuates.'[2]

In the first Book, 'Hope' and 'Joy' on the one side contend with

[1] See the solemn invocation of Omniscience as a witnesss for the truth of this protestation, Op. cit., ii. p. 1039.

[2] *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 462.

'Reason' on the other. The former alleging all the joyous, pleasureable and promising aspects of existence, while Reason retorts by ruthlessly presenting the opposing aspect in each case, and by a lugubrious ringing of the changes on pain, grief, disappointment, disease and death. In the second Book, 'Fear' and 'Pain' hold briefs for the ills of humanity, but are again encountered by the same mocking Reason, who endeavours to prove that they are not evils, but benefits. The theoretical conclusion of the book is pessimism, with asceticism as its practical corollary. Petrarca finds nothing more fragile, nothing more unquiet than existence. The mood is one to which he gives expression in several of his works, as *e.g.* in the *De Vita Solitaria.* Its most developed form is contained in the *De Contemptu Mundi,* a work which he calls his secret; and on which I have shortly a few remarks to make.

But the mysticism which formed so large a part of Petrarca's nature has another and more commonly recognized presentation. And here we come to the Petrarca of the *Rime:* here also we touch upon the vexed question of Laura, whose name is so closely connected with his in the romance of European literature. Her actual existence, and complete identity, is now granted by most Petrarchist scholars, since the publication of De Sade's work.[1] Her family, parentage, husband, children, the chief events of her life are chronicled with the dry particularity of a Registrar's return. But there remains an element in the question only partially solved: the extent and manner of the idealization, or as Professor De Sanctis calls it, 'The transfiguration of Laura.'[2] What was the form in which Petrarca conceived the object of his passionate adoration after death? Partly, no doubt, she was deified. The vision of Laura was to her lover, while on earth, what the celestial vision of God would be to him in eternity:—[3]

> 'Siccome eterna vita è veder Dio,
> Ní piu si brama, ni tramar più lice,
> Cosi me, donna, il voi veder, felice
> Fa in questo breve e frale viver mio':

Partly she was beatified, conceived as a model of womanly purity, another Madonna.[4] Partly also she came to symbolize Intellectual Beauty,

[1] The most recent oppugner of De Sade's theory is Dr. Koerting in his *Leben und Werke,* p. 694, etc.

[2] *Saggio critico sul Petrarca di F. de Sanctis,* chap. ix. p. 122.

[3] Comp. Fiorentino, *Scritti Varii,* p. 122.

[4] In the *De Contemptu Mundi* Augustine sneers at Petrarca's estimate of Laura. 'Nihil enim adversabor, sit regina, sit sancta, sit Dea certe. An Phœbi soror, an Nympharum sanguinis una?'—Op., I. p. 354.

or Truth. Petrarca's passion, with all its overcharged sentiment, and its undoubtedly sensuous character, has also a large admixture of intellectualism. Laura, the unattainable object of his youthful aspiration, became the symbol of other unattained desires, *e.g.* undoubted Truth, unalloyed happiness. She sums up the illusive, unrealized character of so many objects and pursuits, philosophical, political, literary, social and religious by which he had been in life so strongly attracted, but of which he had ascertained by bitter experience the unsatisfying character. It is only by remembering this intense idealization of what at first was a very ordinary passion that we can attach any real meaning to some parts of his *Canzoniere*. Take *e.g.* the sonnet in which he relates that walking one day on the side of the Liguria, and perceiving a laurel bush, he ran so eagerly to inspect it closer, in remembrance of Laura, that he did not perceive a ditch lying in the way, into which he fell; or the passage in which he says the sun, being jealous of Laura's regard for her lover, when she turned her back to his light, immediately enveloped himself in clouds. Speaking of intellectual truth or beauty we can understand and appreciate such metaphors. Over eagerness in the chase for truth has led many of its lovers into a pitfall; and the spiritual light of truth might not only challenge the physical light of the sun, but even claim a superiority. This conception of Laura as an ideal which unified his various aspirations after truth, fame, beauty, freedom, also serves to explain what, on the theory that the mere woman was the sole object of his passion, must seem inexplicable. I allude to his intercourse with the poor unfortunate who was the mother of his children during the precise period when most of his sonnets were written.[1] Either the Laura of those highly wrought productions must have been an ideal personage, or her lover was a profligate beneath contempt.[2]

Laura's death imparted a new direction, a profounder intensity to this idealization. Petrarca now learns, definitively, that his lifelong quest, his hopes and desires, only held him in suspense.

'Tenner molt anni in dubbio il mio desire.'

Whatever he may have once pretended, he is now persuaded that the object of his passion is not to be realized on earth.

[1] Comp. Mézières, *Pétrarque*, chap. iv. See also Villari, *Macchiavelli*, Eng. Trans., i. pp. 115, 116.

[2] Compare his reply to Augustine in the third Dial. of *De Contemptu Mundi*, when he charges him with the base nature of his love. 'Ego enim nihil unquam turpe, imo vero nisi pulcherrimum amasse me recolo.' Op., i. p. 353.

'Quella ch' io cerco e non ritrovo in terra.'

Laura herself warns her lover of the same truth.

'Mio ben non cape in intelletto umano
Spirito ignudo sono; e in ciel mi godo
Quel che tu cerchi è terra gia molti anni.'

But Petrarca not only appreciates the disillusionizing effect of 'Laura in heaven,' but he also perceives the stimulus and excitation induced by his earthly passion. He refuses to call his love an error; at least, if it be an error, it is one from which he will not be willingly parted.[1] He intends to cherish it as long as he lives. Thus he comes to admit the mental value of that long trial of unrealized passion. He finds it better to be spared the rueful experience of 'love's sad satiety.' He begins to perceive that, for man as he is constituted, with infinite desires and finite means of gratification, fruition is not the supremest good. His 'Suspense of passion' has therefore produced the same results as intellectual doubt and uncertainty. It has prompted to further and fuller effort, and made him find his happiness in that effort.[2] This, it seems to me, is one great lesson of Petrarca's *Rime*, and of his relation to Laura. Nor, in passing, is it unimportant to point out how the same feeling of pure aspiration underlies most of the skeptical truth-seeking of the Renaissance. It is at the bottom of, and gives a substantial value to, Dante's Beatrice-worship. It colours much of the idealizations and imaginative desires of the poets of chivalry, Ariosto and Boiardo. It may be detected even under the grinning mask of Pulci; and the animalism of Boccaccio serves to disguise rather than hide the same *sacra fames* for the unattainable. A like feeling prompted the passionate reverence of the Renaissance for the intellectual and artistic beauty revealed by works of antiquity. But in its highest, most passionate, most self-devouring form we have it in Giordano Bruno, whose expressive words 'per amor de la vera sapienza, e studio de la vera contemplatione m' affatico, mi cruccio, e mi tormento,' may well pair off with Petrarca's well-known line:—

'Mille piacer non valgono un tormento.'

[1] Comp. Opera, i. p. 353. Fiorentino, *Scritti Varii*, p. 121, and on the whole question see Prof. Bartoli's chap. 'L'Amore del Petrarca,' in *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., p. 491.

[2] It is interesting to note the different forms of idealization of Beatrice by Dante and Laura by Petrarca. In harmony with Dante's dogmatic instincts, Beatrice is transformed into a symbolical image of Theology, and an authoritative expounder of dogmas. While Laura, in accordance with her lover's freer tendencies, becomes to him the beatified type of unrealized aspiration.

Whatever the form the desire takes, whether art, love, nature, truth, God, it is characterized by the same features of painful weariness and intense eagerness: in Shelley's words

> 'The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.'

Nor is this final conception of a beatified Laura unimportant taken in connexion with Petrarca's mystic pessimism. The extreme form of this feeling I have already glanced at; but in his *De contemptu Mundi* it almost verges on Nihilism. This work, no doubt, reflects the strife between the asceticism of mediæval Christianity and the naturalism of the Renaissance; but its deeper significance seems to me to consist in the additional motive for the 'Contempt of the World' furnished by the failure of his aspirations for love, for fame and for truth. In this respect Petrarca may be likened to other skeptics (Bishop Huet, *e.g.*) who looked forward to a future existence for that demonstrated truth they were unable to find in this.[1] Thus, to Petrarca, his aspiration seemed the path leading from earth to heaven; his earthly love had taught him what heavenly love meant; and his desire of human fame led him to aspire for divine. Hence the 'Welt-schmerz' of Petrarca is not in reality the unintellectual, obscurantist, half-brutish contempt of the world which characterizes the cloistral literature of the middle ages. No doubt he feels

> 'The heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world.'

But the feeling does not induce despair, nor does it hinder research. Indeed, it may well be doubted whether it really occupied such a large place in his mind as his works appear to suggest.[2] Throughout his life Petrarca was a searcher, and his search transcends the grave, which he terms 'the exit from his labyrinth.' The spiritualized and intellectual Laura, whom he says[3] he really loved on earth, he

[1] Comp. on this point Professor Bartoli: 'Nella sua irrequietezza, nell' ondeggiare continuo tra due estremi, nell' aspirare incessantemente alle serenità del paradiso, e nel non trovare mai che le agitazioni dell' inferno; nell' eterno dissidio con sè medesimo: in questo sta, se io non m' inganno, il fondo vero del carattere del Petrarca.'—*I Primi due Secoli della Letteratura Ital.*, p. 442.

[2] Comp. *e.g.* the numerous passages on this point accumulated by Prof. Bartoli. *I Primi due Secoli*, etc., pp. 442, 443, notes.

[3] *De Contemptu Mundi*, Dial. iii., Op. i. 354. 'Neque enim ut putas, mortali rei animum addixi, ne me tam corpus noveris amasse quam animam moribus

expects to find in heaven. The truth and beauty for which he here sighed in vain he may discover there. The glory of his earthly yearning may be the prelude to immortality.

It is time to sum up my remarks on Petrarca. As the first of the Italian Humanists he has a claim on our consideration second only to that of Pomponazzi. He is, as we have seen, a free-thinker, and a confessed skeptic. Freedom of every kind, political, literary, religious, was for him an absolute necessity. Sometimes his passion for it led him into difficulties, as *e.g.* when he sided so enthusiastically with the ill-advised attempt of Rienzi. To him it appeared a noble enterprise, having liberty for its object; and sanctioned by the needs of the present as well as hallowed by the glories of the past. No doubt Petrarca, to quote the authoress of *Corinne*, 'mistook reminiscences for anticipations;' but the mistake was founded upon, and attested, a fervent passion for liberty.

Petrarca's immense influence on his own age, as well as on subsequent times cannot be denied. When himself and Boccaccio formed the neucleus of a literary society at Florence, the town became a centre of literary interests and animated discussion; which was a foretaste of its cultured eminence under the Medici. If all this Renaissance-fermentation was not productive of much lasting work it was at least full of promise for the future. Petrarca and his fellow Humanists conferred an enormous service by merely spreading the knowledge they had acquired of the works and thoughts of the ancients. It was important, in days when literature was confined in a great measure to the few who were able to buy MSS., that the results of their investigations should be known as widely and as speedily as possible. The circle of Petrarca's classical knowledge has been recently investigated by Dr. Koerting with a masterly completeness not as yet equalled by any Italian or French Petrarchist.[1] The services rendered by our free-thinker to the cause of European enlightenment are, as Dr. Koerting points out, to be measured by the new materials he excavated from the quarry of classical learning, not by his methods and interpretations, considered from the standpoint of the nineteenth century. It is quite easy, as the same writer remarks, to discover and marshal in formidable array the errors of Petrarca's classical scholarship. But the task would be ungenerous and would

humana transcendentibus delectatum, quorum exemplo, qualiter inter cælicolas vivatur admoneo,' and passim.

[1] Petrarca's *Leben und Werke*, chap. viii. 'Der Umfang des Wissens Petrarca's,' pp. 458–514. Comp. on Dr. Koerting's work the appreciative Review of Prof. Zumbini in *Nuova Antalogia*, Feb. 1st, 1879, p. 560. The learned reviewer calls the 8th chapter the most novel and valuable portion of the work.

merely serve to confirm the truth of the German proverb, 'When kings build, carters readily find employment.'[1]

After all, Petrarca's chief glory is the noble stand he made against mediævalism, against its philosophy, against its dogma, its false science, its gross superstition. He was thus a philosophical Protestant, who took Cicero's Works for his authority, instead of St. Paul's Epistles. Perhaps the tolerant and semi-Pagan culture he advocated was more suited to his time and country than an austerer substitute for Papal Christianity would have been. If he did not, as I have said, care to assume the part of an active Reformer, he was quite capable of the mental independence pertaining to such a function. We may say of him, more than of Dante, that his strong individualism, the indomitable self-assertion that prompted and sustained his severance from mediæval thought, was the greatest boon he could then have conferred on humanity. Mediævalism implies, as we know, parties, communities, sects, companies and guilds. Isolated thought or action was liable to be branded as a crime. Only men of vigorous intellectual fibre, and calm self-concentration, were able to stand aloof from the confederate crowds, and avow their resolve, as Petrarca did, to swear by no master in philosophy and secular learning,[2] and in religion to bow to no authority but that of conscience.

Boccaccio. Proceeding with our biographical illustrations of the Free-thought of the Renaissance, we come in due course to Boccaccio. Probably the work in all Italian literature which is the most popular, and best known, exponent of the skepticism of the fourteenth century is the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. For our purpose, that writer may stand as *the* litterateur of the humanistic movement. Not that Boccaccio was himself a skeptic, or, on philosophical grounds, even a free-thinker. There was always an element of weakness, and even of superstition, in his character; and towards the end of his life he became a devotee. In this respect he contrasted greatly with his friend Petrarca, whose mind was of a far firmer texture; and whose free-thought, notwithstanding his profession, was of a more fearless and independent character. Nevertheless Boccaccio contributed more than either Dante or Petrarca to advancing free-culture as a popular movement; while as to the effect of his works on the formation of the Italian language, he ranks next to those two giants—the three forming a trio unique in the history of literature.

[1] Koerting, Op. cit., p. 513.

[2] He quotes with approval Horace's dictum,
'Nullius addictus jurare in verba Magistri.' Op. Lat., ii. p. 1051.

The author of the *Decameron* was born A.D. 1313. His father was a serious and unfeeling Florentine merchant, his mother a lively and affectionate Parisienne. Hence Dr. Landau[1] happily applies to him Goethe's lines—

> 'Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur
> Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
> Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur
> Und Lust zu fabuliren.'

The unhappy fate of his much-loved mother forms the subject of one of his tales. After a few years' elementary instruction in Latin, Boccaccio was taken from school, and compelled by his father to prepare for the irksome calling of a merchant to which he had destined him. But instead of attending to his ledgers and invoices, his time was wholly taken up with making verses and studying Dante.[2] At last his father, despairing of the conversion of the young poetic enthusiast into a man of business, sent him to Naples to study the Canon-law. But this was almost as arid an occupation as the perpetual contemplation of the rows of figures in his father's ledgers. His residence at Naples was however of immense importance in the development of his character, both as a man and as a poet. Dante introduced him to the literature, Naples to the life of the Renaissance. There he became acquainted with a court and society whose immoral laxity is depicted in imperishable colours in the pages of the *Decameron*. It was also fruitful as the commencement of his literary career, for at Naples he composed his earlier poetry and tales. Boccaccio, it was evident, was not destined to achieve fame by the study of the Decretals any more than he was to acquire wealth in a merchant's office. Incidentally, perhaps, his readings in jurisprudence served to complete his education, by enlarging his acquaintance with Latin authors, and confirming his taste for the 'sacra filosofia' of Pagan culture. After a few years his father's death left him to his own devices, to pursue the calling of poet and literateur for which Nature had so indisputably designed him.[3]

[1] See his *Giovanni Boccaccio seine Leben und seine Werke*, Stuttgart, 1877, p. 3.

[2] Compare what he says of himself in the *Corbaccio* (*Op. Volg.*, v. p. 185): 'Gli studi adunque alla sacra filosofia pertinenti infino dalla tua puerizia più assai che il tuo padre non avrebbe voluto te piacquero, e massimente in quella parte che a poesia appartiene, nella quale per avventura tu hai con più fervore d'animo che con altezza d'ingegno seguita.' Comp. Baldelli, *Vita*, p. 15.

[3] F. Villani, in his *Vite d' uomini illustri* (p. 9), has a story, bristling with improbabilities, of Boccaccio's receiving his first impulse in the direction of classical poetry at the grave of Virgil, when he was twenty-eight years of

Among the influences which contributed to form the character of Boccaccio, and which impelled and sustained him in his free-thinking course, no small place must be assigned to his friendship with Petrarca. Few literary friendships could be more pure and genial, less alloyed by selfishness or disturbed by misunderstandings than this. The great Humanist was then in the zenith of his fame, the courted and admired of all the foremost among European potentates. Boccaccio was the comparatively unknown author of a few tales and poetical pieces. The actual relation, under the circumstances, was, no doubt, that between a loving master and an attached disciple, rather than between two literary stars of nearly the same magnitude. Yet between the two men sprang up an intimacy and mutual regard destined to last beyond the grave. Both men were, in truth, animated by the same thirst for knowledge, the same devotion to ancient literature. Both were pioneers in the same tacit undertaking. Both aimed at freeing the human intellect and conscience from the thraldom of scholasticism. Both possessed, though in unequal degrees, the same feeling of literary independence.[1] To use Petrarca's expressive words, when he urged his friend to take up his abode in his house, they were two men '*unum cor habentes*,' 'sharing a single heart.'[2]

Boccaccio's earlier works do not contain much for our purpose, nor is their literary value great. Still they indicate the lines of free-thought which converge and culminate in the *Decameron*. At some period of his earlier life he must have studied the different collections of tales and adventures, legends of chivalry, romance, etc., which formed the popular literature of the fourteenth century. A diligent investigation of the sources whence he derived the materials for the *Decameron*, as well as for his minor works, shows us that his researches in that department extended over a wide field.[3] Bouterwek supposes that he found time for this 'novel reading' when he was imprisoned at a merchant's desk. However that may be, the predominant agency in the evolution of his liberal culture seems to me to have been classical. This is proved as well by his association with Petrarca, as by his own earlier works, especially by the earliest of them, *Filocopo*. In reality this is a Pagan love-tale, imitated and expanded to a wearisome length, from the old French Romance of

age! Comp. Mazzuchelli's note on the passage (p. 75), and see Voigt, *Wiederbelebung*, etc. p. 104.

[1] Comp. Mazzuchelli, on Villani, p. 82.

[2] His words are 'Sum vero cui uni tantum suppetit, quantum abunde sufficiat duobus unum cor habentibus, atque unam domum.'

[3] This subject is fully discussed in Dr. Landau's *Die Quellen des Decamerone*, Wien, 1869.

Florio and Blanchflower. The characters and environment are those of heathen antiquity. Christianity, as a distinctive creed, can hardly be said to exist in its pages. At most it is only an insignificant appanage of Pagandom. The deities who govern the world are those of Olympus, and are mostly invested with their classical personalities and attributes; though sometimes, in the customary Renaissance manner, they become personifications of virtues and vices, and their names equivalents for the persons of the Christian Trinity. Christ is called the Son of Jupiter;[1] Pluto is the fallen Lucifer; the Pope, it is difficult to say why, is transformed from the Vicegerent of Christ to the Vicar of Juno, and the goddess reveals her wishes to him by means of Iris, as if he were a hero of Homeric story. All the Olympians are decorated with Christian titles. Jupiter is the omnipotent King of the Universe. Juno, Venus, Mars, and Neptune, with the other divinities have the epithet 'Saint' prefixed to their names. Florio, the love-struck hero of the tale, implores the help of 'Saint Venus,' and solicits her intercession with her son Cupid, in nearly the same terms as a devout Catholic might have used in addressing the Madonna. The same epithet 'Saint' is prefixed to the works and teaching of the ancients, thus we find 'the Holy Books of Ovid,' 'the sacred principles of Pythagoras,' etc. The hero of Boccaccio's story is finally converted to Christianity by a monk Hilarius, who, in his summary of Christian history and doctrine, places on precisely the same level the dogmas of the Church and the most puerile legends of heathen antiquity or ecclesiastical history.[2]

Though the style of the *Filocopo*, as of his other minor works, is far inferior in artistic simplicity, in clearness and point, and in delicate humour and sarcasm, to that of the *Decameron*, it possesses situations which vividly recall those of the later work. Especially is this the case with the 4th Book which describes a supposed 'Court of Love' held at Naples. Here the scenery and environment, the incidents and the language,[3] closely resemble those of the *Decameron*,

[1] See the work itself, *passim* in vols. vii. and viii. of the *Opere Volgari*, and Comp. Dr. Landau's summary, *Giovanni Boccaccio*, etc., 43–58.

[2] See Hilarius's exposition, which may be referred to as illustrating the elementary teaching, both Biblical and classical, of the fourteenth century. Boccaccio, *Op. Volg.*, vol. viii. p. 309, etc., etc.

[3] Here *e.g.* are sentences which might be paralleled by numerous passages in the *Decameron*. 'Era già Apollo col carro della luce salito al meridiano cerchio, e quasi con diritto occhio riguardava la rivestita terra, quando le donne e i giovani in quel luogo adunati lasciato il festeggiare, per diverse parti del giardino cercando dilettevoli ombre e diversi diletti per diverse schiere prendevano, fuggendo il caldo aere che i dilicati corpi offendeva,' etc., etc.—*Op. Volg.*, viii. pp. 31–32.

and may possibly have supplied the germ of the more famous work. But however this may be, the *Filocopo*, which occupied its author for some years, may be taken as indicating the direction of Boccaccio's training under the influence of Petrarca; and we find in it a clue to much of the humanistic comprehensiveness, the tolerance and free-thought which are distinguishing attributes of the *Decameron*.[1]

Passing now to this master work of Boccaccio's, the circumstances which originated it represent forcibly the thought and social manners of Italy in the middle of the fourteenth century. A company of high-born youths and maidens, terrified by the ravages of the Black Death then devastating Florence, agree to retire into the country and to solace their seclusion by the enjoyment of lovely scenery, story-telling, feasting, music and dancing. There seems to me a curious and not uninstructive parallel between this supposed origin of a work destined to become the *vade mecum* of the Renaissance, and the real genesis of that great movement. In either case there was an abandonment of a city of the dead, for more wholesome and uninfected localities. Men were leaving the mortuary of the middle ages, with its livid corpse-like forms of superstitions and corruptions, its science stunted by ignorance, its Christianity eaten into by dogma and sacerdotalism, and were commencing a new life under the benigner influences of Humanism and Naturalism, of reason and of culture. The transition is marked in imperishable characters by the contrast which Boccaccio draws between the loathsome city in which religion, morality, friendship, decency and whatever else could give value to human life having perished, were lying unburied like so many festering corpses, and 'il luogo sopra una piccola montagnetta, da ogni parte lontano alquanto alle nostre strade, di varii albuscelli e piante tutte di verdi fronde ripieno, piacevoli a riguardare.'[2] The 'piccola montagnetta' of the *Decameron* might almost be regarded as a Pisgah height whence Boccaccio obtained a glimpse of the Promised Land, into the possession of which Italy and Europe were then entering. But if the occasion of the work suggests these affinities to the epoch that gave it birth, from an ethical standpoint it reveals the heartlessness and irreligion of the same period. Never was there a more startling illustration of the Epicurean maxims 'Carpe diem,' 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' than that furnished by the behaviour of Boccaccio's heroes and heroines. That such a course of

[1] Comp. Landau, *Gio. Boc.*, p. 43. Dr. Landau also regards the *Filostrato*, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, and *Fiammetta* as preparatory exercises in language, tone and subject to the *Decameron*.

[2] Intr. to *Decameron* (the text of which is here quoted from vols. i.–v. of Moutier's Edition of the *Opere Volgari*), vol. i, p. 32.

conduct, such an exaltation of selfishness, such a flagrant forgetfulness of the prime principles of Christianity, should have been depicted by a writer certainly well acquainted with the ordinary motives by which men and women of the time were guided, shows us how far religion and duty had ceased to be effective agencies in human conduct. Remembering the circumstances of the time, the behaviour of the chief personages of the *Decameron* assumes the aspect of a veritable dance of death. We are reminded of the recklessness, the absolute want of fellow feeling which characterized the Athenian Plague, as described by Thucydides. Curiously enough, Boccaccio describes almost in the words of the Greek historian, or of his Roman imitator, the effects of the pestilence in producing a feeling of debasing selfishness; but it never seems to strike him, if we except the somewhat halting apology contained in the Introduction, that the occasion of his work is also a case in point.

What we might thus call the plot of the *Decameron* is a fitting vestibule to the book itself. This is redolent of Free-thought passing into licence, of independence of judgment not always restrained by discretion, of skepticism too spontaneous and unregulated to be philosophical, of an irreligion degenerating into impiety, and of a naturalism whose occasional excess becomes unhuman and so far unnatural. Allowance must of course be made for the circumstances among which the work was engendered. Petrarca justified its free tone on account of the youth of the author, though his biographers have shown that Boccaccio was about forty years of age when he composed it. Other writers seem to make it the accidental outcome of the social demoralization effected by the Plague.[1] That something may be said for the latter view I have already admitted. Taken as a whole, the work bears the indelible impress of its terrible surroundings. It reminds one of a landscape whose foreground is lit up with brilliant sunshine, but which is curtained behind with a heavy bank of purple and livid thunder-clouds. Amid the gaiety and jocund humour, the amusing adventures, and the reckless enjoyment of life, of the tales; the plague-stricken city of Florence looms in the background like a spectral abode of Dis and the Furies. Boccaccio spreads his intellectual feast, he artistically arranges his gold and silver vessels, he prepares his choicest and most delicate viands, but the table-cover which supports them is, in reality, a funeral pall. With almost a single stroke of the pen he paints the confusion of the time, when he tells how the wild animals so long unhunted had lost all fear of man. That the demoralization thus strikingly indicated

[1] Comp. Dr. Landau, *Gio. Boc.*, p. 128.

should have extended to man, and infected more or less his conceptions of religion and duty, is scarcely to be wondered at. Nevertheless we must, on a complete view of the subject, ascribe the tone and temper of the work to other and more general causes than the social disturbance produced by the Black Death. In reality the *Decameron* is a genuine outcome of the Renaissance—the free movement of thought and life experienced in Italy for the two preceding centuries. It is the third link in the literary chain of which the first two consists of the *Divina Commœdia* of Dante and the *Rime* of Petrarca. No doubt 'la moritifera pestilenza' intensified for the time causes already in operation. The liberation of thought, initiated by new intellectual life and by a reaction against ecclesiastical thraldom, became temporarily merged in the social and moral disorganization caused by the Plague. Regarding the work as a popular exponent of an age of so much thought-fermentation, it is a little surprising to find in it an almost entire absence of any intellectual or speculative interest. The company are almost as devoid of serious thought, or reflection, as if they were children. A serene air of optimism prevades much of the work which is in the grimmest possible contrast with its melancholy surroundings. The principle which Voltaire applied with bitter irony to the Earthquake of Lisbon, *i.e.* 'This is the best of all possible worlds,' is received with acquiescence by Dioneo, Fiammetta, and their companions in circumstances just as terrible and just as provocative of recalcitrant skepticism; and their resolution to 'eat, drink, and be merry,' is the practical outcome of their opinion. Even Voltaire's ridicule of the ordinary theories of Providence might almost have been justified at such a season. It had at least the merit of being an exercise of reason on the problems of the universe, whereas Boccaccio's heroes and heroines act and think as if their *laissez faire* Epicureanism were an adequate solution of all such enigmas. No doubt the form of the book precludes anything like a reasoned investigation of truth, even if Boccaccio's intellect were equal to the task; but he does not approach, even incidentally and lightly, as *e.g.* Montaigne does in his *Essais*, a philosophical estimate of truth and the bases on which it is grounded. The skepticism of the *Decameron*, in short, is literary and popular rather than philosophical and scientific, as was that of Pomponazzi. Engendered by an opposition to ecclesiastical dogma, it is rather negative than positive; at least its limits are never accurately determined. The principles to which Boccaccio appealed and by which he required that the dogmas of the Church and every other form of authoritative truth should be tested, were no more recondite ones than reason, nature, common sense, the social instincts and the

interests of humanity. We have the keynote of the book in one of those casual remarks, which, as Shelley has pointed out, Boccaccio often employs to express things which have serious meanings.[1] It is Pampinea's address when she expounds and justifies the plan of the *Decameron*. 'Donne mie care, voi potete così come io molte volte avere udito chi a niuna persona fa ingiuria chi onestamente usa la sua ragioni:[2] words which strikingly indicate both the negative conception of human duty and the appeal to the individual reason, or conscience, which are distinguishing features of the *Decameron*. Boccaccio like his Master, Petrarca, and in a lesser degree like Dante, asserted human knowledge, judgment and independence, as the antagonistic principles of excessive and unprincipled dogma. Nor indeed was it necessary, for the popular object of the *Decameron*, to enter upon a systematic exposition of skepticism, and the foundations of valid belief. What is called a reformation, or a modification, over a wide area of popular thought is rather a result than a process. The latter, consisting of the operation of hidden and subtle agencies, is passed before the change itself becomes manifest. Thus it was with the Renaissance, as typified by the *Decameron*. The human conscience in Italy had already assumed an attitude of dogmatic negation. It had already determined on the impassable gulf between morality and Roman Christianity. It did not require a mathematical demonstration of the absurdity *e.g.* of image and relic worship, or a deliberate insistence on the intolerable abuses to which other Romanist dogmas were exposed. That Papal Christianity was an evil had become a foregone conclusion, even among those who could not see how it was to be remedied. All that Italian free-thinkers needed was a statement of their unbelief in the most emphatic terms. This the *Decameron* provided. Tacitly, and incidentally, it was a collection of popular convictions on the subject-matter of Romanist dogmas. This fact explains the immediate and enormous popularity of the work in Italy itself. What Italians had hitherto derived in a great measure from foreign sources, from Provençal poetry, French

[1] Shelley's opinion of Boccaccio, whom he preferred to Ariosto and Tasso, seems worth quoting: 'How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us. Boccaccio seems to me to have possessed a deep sense of the fair ideal of human life considered in its social relations. His more serious theories of love agree especially with mine. He often expresses things lightly too, which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind. He is a moral casuist, the opposite of the Christian, stoical, ready-made and worldly system of morals,' etc. See Mr. Symond's monograph on Shelley, p. 111.

[2] Intro. to Decam., *Op. Volg.*, i. 24.

fabliaux, and Eastern legends, they had now in their own purest Tuscan dialect. The *Decameron* was the text book of Renaissance skepticism. Nor was it only their doctrines that Italians discovered in the pages of the *Decameron.* Its characters were well-marked types of men who might have been found by dozens in the streets of Rome, Naples, and Florence. No matter where the supposed scene of the story is laid, or from what literary source it is derived, its personages, their idiosyncrasies, modes of thought and manners, as painted by Boccaccio, are all native Italian. Not more truly do the 'Christian' and 'Christiana' of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* represent ideal types of English Puritanism than Boccaccio's characters personate the men of the Renaissance. Even that prince of humorous hypocrites Ciappeletto has numerous counterparts among his countrymen. For the pious friar who improves the occasion of his supposed exemplary end, thus addresses his audience: 'e voi, maladetti da Dio, per ogni fuscello di paglia che vi si volge tra' piedi, bestemmiate Iddio e la Madre, e tutta la corte di Paradiso' —words which seems to show that Renaissance freedom of thought had become so allied with licence of speech that we many accept the most impious of Boccaccio's personages, and even Pulci's brutal giant Margutte, as not greatly over-drawn caricatures of the period. In this particular indeed, the worst characters of Italian novelists, or Romantic poets, might easily be paralleled by historical instances of undoubted authenticity, as the readers of such works as Sismondi's *Republics* or Mr. Symond's volumes on the Renaissance must be fully aware.

It is quite in harmony with Boccaccio's unspeculative temperament that we have no attempt in his works to discuss, or even formally to question, any of the primary abstract beliefs of Christianity. His polemical attitude to Roman dogma begins when it clashes with human duty and the practical concerns of life. We have nothing in him resembling Pulci's sarcasms on the Trinity, or immortality. Yet so far as a uniform belief may be extracted from his writings, his speculative conceptions on the subject of Christianity were largely alloyed with the Pagan elements of his time. His notion of God *e.g.* is complicated with the ideas of Fortune, Chance, Nature, as in the case of other Renaissance thinkers. Nature is to him, as to Bruno and Vanini, "the Parent of all things," and the relation in which men and their shortcomings stand to her dictates is thus described, "la benignità di Dio non guardare a' nostri errori, quando da *cosa che per noi veder non si possa* procedano."[1] For Fortune he has such unqualified regard as to ascribe to its agency not only contingencies

[1] *Op. Volg.*, i. p. 56.

tending to virtue, but even opportunities for vice. His general conception of Providence is that it works by immutable laws;[1] but he seems to hint his disbelief in a doctrine of special or particular Providence; and says that men under the circumstances should have recourse to human reason. If this, as seems likely, was Boccaccio's real belief, it would go far to explain the philosophical indifference with which he contemplated the ravages of the Black Death.

Boccaccio, so far as we gather from his writings, does not appear to have attempted a separation between the Christianity of the Gospels and its ecclesiastical evolution. But he is clearly alive not only to the fact of its perversion, but also to the modes by which it has been effected. The verbal jugglery *e.g.* by which unchristian deeds were labelled with Christian designations he exposes scornfully and incisively.[2] Nor does he fail to observe the pernicious astuteness of sacerdotalism, by which the very excellencies of Christianity were made to subserve the selfish and immoral objects of the Church.[3] He also insists on the example of Christ, as inculcating moral action as well as moral teaching.[4] Like Petrarca and other leaders of the Renaissance, Boccaccio employs against Rome all the armoury of his invective and the keen incisiveness of his wit and raillery. Rome, he says, was once the head, she is now the tail of the world. The lives of her Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops are either denounced in language vigorous and uncompromising as Luther's, or are castigated by sarcasm and irony peculiarly his own. There is scarce a single feature of Romish abuse and corruption to which Boccaccio does not apply his lash. The invocation of saints, the worship of images, confessions, adoration of relics, penances, pilgrimages, canonizations, miracles, superstitious prayers, charms and crossings, almsgiving, supposed death-bed conversions and the unscrupulous use of such occasions by the clergy, popular conceptions of heaven, hell and purgatory, the numberless tricks, impostures and juggleries of monks and friars—in a word the whole doctrine, polity and worship of Romanism, as it presented itself to the ordinary Italian of the fourteenth century.

Nor are the limits of Boccaccio's free-thought reached by an enumeration of the dogmas and abuses which he has assailed. The story of the Three Rings, which we have already alluded to, reveals a still profounder phase of his unbelief. Limiting its scope to Monotheistic

[1] *Op. Volg.*, v. p. 84.
[2] *Op.*, i. p. 60.
[3] *Op.*, iii. p. 84.
[4] *Op.*, iii. p. 85, referring to Acts i. 1: "Jesus began both to do and to teach."

creeds, it is almost an assertion of religious indifference, a Renaissance mode of affirming the argument of Pope's lines:

> 'For forms of faith let angry zealots fight,
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.'

And the principle thus formally enounced is confirmed by incidental remarks in other tales, as *e.g.* the conclusion of Ciappeletto's story, that men may approach God by unworthy means, but if the worship be sincere God does not regard the channel through which it is conveyed. Indeed there are indications, both in the *Decameron* and in his other writings, that at one part of his life Boccaccio shared Petrarca's conception of religion as consisting largely of culture—the Renaissance combination of 'Sweetness and Light.' Such seems the meaning of the words put into the mouth of Guido Cavalcanti—himself a foremost thinker of the time, and referred to with manifest approval by Boccaccio. Cavalcanti, refusing to join a certain club or society, was once surrounded by its members while walking in the arched enclosure of St. John's Church. One of them said to him, alluding to his supposed Epicureanism, 'Guido, you refuse to be of our society, but when you have discovered that there is no God,[1] what good will you have done?' Guido, seeing himself surrounded, said, 'Signori, you may tell me what you please in your own ground,' and, placing his hand on one of the arches, he vaulted lightly over it and so escaped. Whereupon his persecutors thinking that he had spoken without meaning, were corrected by one among them, who said, 'It is yourselves, Signori, who are without understanding, if you cannot perceive that worthily and in few words he has spoken to us the severest reproof possible. If you consider well, these arches are the abode of the dead . . . and he calls them our ground (nostra casa), to show us that we, and other men ignorant and unlearned as we are, are in comparison with himself and learned men, worse than dead, and therefore, we being here, are in our own abode.' Probably in no other passage of the *Decameron* have we the mission of the Renaissance, and its attitude to older forms of religious thought, so

[1] Guido de Cavalcanti was the son of the Cavalcanti whom Dante in the 10th Canto of the *Inferno* describes as an Epicurean. (Comp. Villani, *Vite d' uomini illust.*, p. 60). The son was a free-thinker; but there is no ground for supposing him an Atheist. See on this point Manni, *Storia del Decam.*, Part ii. p. 425, etc., who quotes the following words from Count Magalotti's Letters, which are applicable to all similar accusations in the time of the Renaissance, 'I mattematici passavano per Negromanti, i Fisici per poco religiosi, e che i Professori di belle lettere, punto punto che *la loro erudizione sopraffacesse quella degli altri*, erano subito diffamati per Eretici; tanto era sopraffine in quei tempi l' ignoranza.'

distinctly enumerated. But there is another aspect of the *Decameron* which proves perhaps more than any other the extent and virulence of the opposition to Romanist dogma which marked the Italians of the fourteenth century. The most repulsive feature of the book, to a man of Christian culture, is the application to obscene purposes and objects of the most sacred words and ideas, doctrines and rites of the Christian religion.[1] As a general characteristic of the period this is of the greater importance, because it is a feature shared by most of the popular literature of the Renaissance; indeed all the Italian novelists[2] of this and the following centuries seem to vie with each other in this flagrant violation of decency and good taste. Here Free-thought seems to reach its climax of anti-Christian audacity. The language of piety, of devotion, of ecclesiastical dogma, is not only ingeniously perverted, but grossly travestied and burlesqued. It is not therefore skepticism that we have here manifested; indeed the phenomenon may be said to be entirely independent of philosophical grounds of dissent from Christianity; it is rather a shameless cynicism, a gross unfeeling parade of the worst passions of human nature, which is indescribably repulsive, not only to a religious mind, but to every man imbued with the faintest rudiments of morality.

Allowance should perhaps be made for the peculiarities of a natural temperament, which seems now as then unable to distinguish between wit and scurrility, and which can pass without any appreciable interval or sense of difference from the extreme of superstition to that of blasphemous ribaldry. Boccaccio admits, though he cannot explain, the evil tendency of men to laugh at what is bad rather than what is good,[3] it is at least the tendency of his countrymen, and is one to which in the *Decameron* he habitually and excessively defers. In other respects, also, nothing can be better adapted to Italian tastes and aptitudes than the tone and manner of the *Decameron*. Nothing could be more effective as a 'Dissuasive from Popery' than Boccaccio's ridicule. Instead of philosophical arguments, ethical discourses, virulent tirades and denunciations, he exposes the corruptions of the Church by raillery, wit, humour, sarcasm and irony—weapons always appreciated by the genuine Italian. What formal reprehension of clerical hypocrisy, *e.g.* could have operated so efficiently

[1] In alluding to this feature of the *Decameron*, it may be remarked that there is a strange want of decorum and good taste in M. Bonneau's Introduction to the recently published reprint of Le Maçon's Translation. (Paris: I. Liseux, 1878.) See *e.g.* vol. i., Avert., p. xvii.

[2] It may suffice to name Sacchetti and Masuccio as especially sinners in this particular.

[3] *Op. Volg.*, iii. p. 107.

as Boccaccio's well-known examples. What elaborate refutation of the worship of relics would have been so effective as Father Onion's list of those he had seen with, and acquired from, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, however, men who are converted only by their sense of the ludicrous do not always prove the most durable of converts.

That Boccaccio was cognisant, and a little ashamed, of the coarseness of the *Decameron* is well known. It is perhaps as an apology for the whole work that he prefixed to one of his immoral tales the admonition that its hearers must act as they do in a garden, *i.e.* 'pluck the roses and leave the briars behind.' But a more philosophical justification might have been found in the depravity of the Church. Boccaccio, we must remember, was the Hogarth, as Pulci was the Rabelais, of the Italian Renaissance. His novels with all their laxity, their scornful treatment of sacred things, were not imaginary concoctions of vicious manners and opinions, assumed to characterize a fictitious people; they were forcible sketches drawn from the life, with little extra colouring or tendency to caricature, of the ecclesiastics and laymen of his time. He says himself, and we must accept his statement as another half-hinted apology for his book, that the age being libertine and lawless, his language might well be excused a certain amount of licentiousness.[1] There is not a single lascivious

[1] *Op. Volg.*, iii. p. 171. For fair unexaggerated defences of the freedom and naïvité of the *Decameron*, comp. Dr. Landau, p. 135, etc., and Dr. Koerting, *Boccaccio's Leben und Werke*, p. 658, etc. The former asserts that the Prologue to Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath' is more indecent than the worst parts of the *Decameron*. He also suggests a comparison for apologetic purposes of Boccaccio's work with St. Bernard's sermons, *The Book of De la Tour Landry* for the instruction of his daughters, and the *Gesta Romanorum*. But the most eloquent defence yet offered of the *Decameron* is that of Giosuè Carducci, in his Discorsó, *Ai parentali di G. Boccacci in Certaldo*, pp. 18, 19. 'Certo, poichè in Natura v' è il senso e nella società i traviamenti e le colpe del senso, così la materia sensuale fu maneggiata anche dal Boccaccio, come da molti prima e dopo di lui. Ma chi declamasse ch' egli guastò il costume, che spogliò di fede e di pudicizia la donna, che degrada l' amore, che attenta alla famiglia, quegli dimenticherebbe o dissimulerebbe più cose. Dimenticherebbe la passione fedele della popolano Lisabetta e della principessa Gismonda, dimenticherebbe la gentil cortesia di Federico degli Alberighi e le gare di generosità tra Gisippo e Tito Quinzio, dimenticherebbe le celesti sofferenze di Griselda, la pastorella provata fino al martirio dal marito marchese, la Griselda a cui la poesia cavalleresca nulla ha da contrapporre nè par da lontano. Dissimulerebbe che le novelle ove il puro senso trionfa sono ben poche, che una ben più grossolana sensualità regnava già da tempo anche nei canti del popolo, ed era stata provocata dalle ipocrisie, del misticismo cavalleresco e dagli eccessi dell' ascetismo. Dimenticherebbe o dissimulerebbe che il Boccaccio non distilla a' suoi lettori i lenti filtri della voluttà conmentale, non li perverte a cercare

image or immoral description in the whole *Decameron* that might not be paralleled, with far greater outrages on decency, in the lives and writings of the clergy of his time. Boccaccio might have said with one of his characters, that 'it was too much to expect the sheep to have more resolution and constancy than the shepherds.' The excuses he makes for his work seem to me called forth by the fact of its being written in Italian, and for that reason circulating among the lower classes, to whom the open and reckless depravity of their superiors was as yet a little strange. Petrarca, who was perfectly cognisant of the life and conversation of the higher orders, both ecclesiastic and lay, saw no more ground for animadverting on the indecency of the *Decameron* than what was furnished by the warm imagination of a youth of nigh forty years! Besides, all the more indecent among Boccaccio's tales are found in collections existing before his time, and with which the cultured sections of Italian society were quite familiar. It cannot be shown that he added to their grossness; his remodelling consisting chiefly in reclothing them in his choice though somewhat Latinized Tuscan, and imparting to them humour, liveliness, point, picturesqueness and vivacity.

But notwithstanding the indecency and profanity of portions of the *Decameron*, it is by no means an unqualifiedly vicious book. Underlying, or side by side with, its immorality, and its seeming mockery of religious topics, there is discernible a strong undercurrent of regard for what is honourable, chaste and virtuous.[1] The contents of the book have in fact the motley diversified character, as well as the liveliness, excessive ingenuousness and point, of Montaigne's *Essays*. Both are indeed representative works. Both describe and embody, as in a kind of literary mosaic, the heterogeneous qualities of a transition period of intellectual fermentation and uncertainty. In both are found depravity side by side with virtuous teaching. Both attempt an amalgam of Christianity and Paganism; and both are distinguished by religious toleration and a broad conception of human duties, beliefs and interests.

la felicità nella malattia delle languide fantasticherie, dell' ammollimento e della effeminazione. Il Boccaccio fu un poeta sano; e l' avvenimento della pornocrazia in letteratura è impresa d' altri tempi e d' altri scrittori.' Comp. on Boccaccio's treatment of women, the elaborate work of Attilio Hortis, *Studj sulle opere Latine del Boccaccio*, pp. 76, 77, etc.

[1] Comp. *e.g.* the 6th and 7th Novels of the 10th Day. Some authors have supposed that the latter portion of the *Decameron* is less skeptical than the former. Thus Settembrini remarks, 'La prima giornata comincia col dubbio, l' ultima finisce colla fede nella virtù.' (*Lezioni di Lett. Ital.*, vol. i. p. 170.) But this seems accidental, and is partly attributable to the design of making the Novels of each day bear upon a particular subject.

That the chief outcome of the *Decameron* was liberty of thought and worship, that it expressed a healthy recoil against ecclesiastical dogma, and that for this reason it was pregnant with beneficial influences for the culture of the Renaissance, no impartial student of the period will deny. This zeal for freedom was doubtless attended by excesses, as I have already admitted. But there are few products of intellectual fermentation on a large scale which, even in their noblest and most homogeneous maturity, do not share the bitter flavour of the leaven which originally set in motion the inert mass. If human instincts, in righting themselves after centuries of oppression, gave a sudden lurch in the opposite direction, their next impulse was the likelier to be a self-steadying and moderate movement. Certainly the mere negative stand-point of the *Decameron* was no small gain to the mental progress of Italy. It was necessary to brush off the hypocrisies and sophistries of Rome, to expose fearlessly the immoral results of its dogmatic development, to substitute for an infallibility whose exercise manifested the most undoubted imbecility, intellectual and moral, the jurisdiction of reason and common sense. The lesson it taught Italy and Europe was the primary veracity of the human conscience, as against all systems of dictation and extraneous authority. Just as Descartes penetrated the alluvial strata of his acquired knowledge until he came to the primary rock of consciousness, so did Boccaccio strip off with scorn and contumely the figments and falsities of mediæval belief, and enjoined the Renaissance truth-seeker to be satisfied only with the reality he had himself discovered to be such. And as with the rights of man, so also with those of nature. The *Decameron* vindicated them against the morbid asceticism, the fanatical obscuranticism and other-worldliness, which at that time was the only serious form in which Christianity was able to manifest itself.

The subversive tendencies of the *Decameron*, in relation to dogma, were soon recognized by the Church. And it is instructive to observe that her fulminations were directed in the first instance not against those Tales which were most grossly immoral, but against those which assailed her own ungodly profits, *e.g.* Father Onion's relics. Besides directing her thunders against Boccaccio's work, she employed the more subtle plan of purging it of all its anti-clerical errors,[1] thus treating it as she did the *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci, or as the Tractarian party in the English Church did the *Pilgrim's Progress* when they endeavoured to de-Puritanize it. The attempt, as may be

[1] On this ridiculous attempt, see Manni, *Storia del Decam.* Part iii. chap. x. Tiraboschi *Storia*, vii. p. 2306, and comp. Dr. Landau's interesting chapter (viii.) of his *Giovanni Boccaccio*, p. 123, 'Das Decameron und seine Schicksale.'

imagined, was unsuccessful. Gradually, but not so quickly as Boccaccio's Latin writings, the fame of the book became diffused throughout Europe. Everywhere it was accepted as a worthy and characteristic product of Renaissance Free-thought, by one of the leading spirits of that movement, and it contributed much to disseminate and sustain the principles which originally gave it birth.

There are some books of which it may be said, they are greater than their authors. They represent a short-lived literary climacteric, a *tour de force* of achievement—which having been gained is succeeded by a proportional relapse into what is apparently the more normal condition of the writers. The *Decameron* is a work of this kind. It represents the high-water mark of Boccaccio's literary career, and is followed by an immediate and rapid subsidence of the flood-tide of his Free-thought.

Boccaccio's first love, as we know, was Latin literature. He seems to have shared the prejudice of Petrarca—engendered by classical enthusiasm—that literary productions, to be permanent, must be written in Latin;[1] and just as his friend based his hopes of fame on his tedious epic of Africa, and regarded the *Rime* as literary trifling, so Boccaccio forsook the vein of gold he had struck in the *Decameron* and turned his attention to a compendium of classical antiquity, his *De Genealogia Deorum*. A change in this direction seems to have set in shortly after the publication of the *Decameron*. How far it may have been suggested by the clamours evoked by that work we have no means of knowing, but it was accelerated and confirmed by the event which is called his Conversion. Some time about the middle or end of 1361, a Carthusian monk, Ciani, waited upon Boccaccio, representing himself as sent by a brother Carthusian (Petroni) who had died in the odour of sanctity in May of that year, to Boccaccio as well as to other free-thinkers, in order to reproach them with their evil lives and to lead them back into the right way. Petroni had objected especially to Boccaccio, that he had perverted the talents God had given him, and led men astray by his corrupt writings, which were veritable 'tools of the Devil.' Ciani adjured our free-thinker, in the name of the sainted Peter aforesaid, to abandon his evil courses, relinquish his pernicious poetry, and to employ himself with worthier studies. In the event of his neglecting the warning he threatened

[1] In this particular Dante was more prescient than either Petrarca or Boccaccio. He changed his intention of writing the *Divina Commœdia* in Latin, because he foresaw that a poem written in Tuscan was more likely to be popular, and hence to confer immortality, than one written in Latin, 'Che se volgare fosse,' says Boccaccio, 'il suo poema egli piacerebbe, dove in Latino sarebbe schifato.' 'Comento Sopra Dante,' *Op. Volg.*, x. p. 23.

him with a speedy death and with the pains of hell. It was a curious Nemesis that made the author of the *Decameron* the object of attentions which he had himself so unsparingly ridiculed, and which, none knew better than he, were prompted either by self-interest or blind fanaticism. Unluckily the monk caught the great enemy of his order in a weak moment. Incredible as it may seem, Boccaccio believed Ciani's story, together with certain supernatural revelations employed to confirm it. He resolved, in order to avert the fate in store for him, to reform his course of life, to give up his poetry and *belles lettres*, and to sell his treasured books. Never was the triumph of superstition over genius more complete. Happily he informed Petrarca of his design in a letter which no longer exists, and his friend replied in a well known Epistle, which is a model of dry humour and caustic sarcasm.[1] He represents himself as being shocked on hearing from Boccaccio the news of his approaching death, but his apprehensions were dispelled on a careful perusal of his letter. The prognostication of a pious monk founded upon a divine revelation, he ironically admits, would be a serious matter—provided it were true. But how often are lies and deceits disseminated under the garb of religion, how often is not the name of God misused to betray mankind. All men indeed are mortal, and are certain of not a single moment of life. But Boccaccio has an advantage over other mortals, for his prophet has warned him of a fate which is not imminent, but approaching, and has allowed him time for repentance. Petrarca, as we know, was not insensible to the worth of religious emotion and duty; but he cordially detested the monkish perversion which made religion synonymous with ignorance and fanaticism. He assures Boccaccio that the counsel to forsake his poetry and his studies could only have emanated from illiterate and ill-minded men. He adds that he will buy his books if he determines to sell them. It is gratifying to find that the Epistle of his 'venerable master,' as he often styles Petrarca, produced some good effect on Boccaccio. His apprehensions of a speedy death, etc., were allayed. He determined to continue his studies, and not to sell his books. But Ciani's mission was not destined to be fruitless. Dr. Landau has observed that after the year 1361 there is a decided change, and unhappily for the worse, in Boccaccio's style. No longer has it the freedom, vivacity and point of the *Decameron*. Whether from ill-health or religious terrorism, it becomes dull, lifeless and insipid. He thinks it needful also to bestrew his later works with scraps of ecclesiastical dogma, in order to reassure his friends of his orthodoxy. But the most paradoxical effect of Boccaccio's con-

[1] *Rer. Senil.*, lib. i. ep. iv. Op. om., vol. ii. p. 740.

version is that he becomes a collector of religious relics—a disciple of and dealer with men like Father Onion whom he lashes so unmercifully in the *Decameron*. It is only by remembering the peculiar union of skepticism and superstition characteristic of his time, that we are able to account for a taste so singular, in the case of an enlightened and scholarly thinker like Boccaccio. It is said that when he died he had accumulated a large collection of these curiosities. We are not told what they were, and have therefore no means of knowing whether they were all as genuine as 'il dito dello Spirito Santo cosi intero e saldo come fu mai,' or 'uno de dente della santa Croce, e in una ampolletta alquanto del suono delle campane del tempio di Salamone.'[1]

There is little in the remainder of Boccaccio's life calculated to throw much light on his Free-thought. His energies are now directed to popularizing classical knowledge. Besides the *De Genealogia Deorum*, he published *De claris mulieribus*, and *De casibus virorum illustrium*, works which were of standard authority not only in Italy, but in the greater part of Europe during the fifteenth century.[2] By these labours he helped to diffuse an acquaintance with heathen antiquity, and *ipso facto* contributed to advance the cause of the Renaissance.

During the latter years of his life Boccaccio's learning, and his well known affection for Dante, received a gratifying recognition by his appointment in 1373 to deliver at Florence a course of public lectures on the *Divina Commœdia*. He is thus the first Professor of Dante in Europe. The result of that appointment is his well known *Comento sopra Dante*, which we may take as representing the last stage of his intellectual course, and his final attitude in relation to Free-thought. As might be supposed, he has no word of condemnation for the *Inferno* from the point of view of the injustice or repulsiveness of the idea. He sees nothing to animadvert, or even question, in the endless and excruciating torments of non-Christians. He is particularly zealous in defending Dante's orthodoxy, and no less solicitous in demonstrating his own. But there are still traces in his commentary of the free-thinking author of the *Decameron*. This tendency is especially marked when the literary and moral excellences of the heathen is contrasted with their supposed eternal destiny. Few estimates, *e.g.* of Aristotle, Sokrates and the other denizens of the first circle of the

[1] *Decam.* Giorn. Sest., Nov. x.

[2] Comp. Dr. Landau, *Giov. Boc.*, p. 211, and on the general subject of Boccaccio's Latin writings, see the *Studj sulle Opere Latine del Boccaccio*, of Attilio Hortis. (Trieste, 1879.)

Inferno could be more appreciative[1] than that of Boccaccio. He also discusses fully the propriety of punishing such noble examples of humanity for errors of which they were not guilty consciously, if at all. He is however inclined to believe that punishment can only follow positive transgression; and that if the heathen are punished eternally they must have rejected some such divine call as that indicated by the Psalmist: 'There is no voice nor language, but their voices are heard among them.' This discussion is closed by the words: 'Nondimeno che qui per me detto sia, io non intendo di derogare in alcuno atto alla cattolica verità, ne alla sentenza di più savii."[2] On heresiarchs he is just as severe as Dante; and his reasons for their eternal torments are such as would justify the inquisitor in the unreserved application of his racks and thumb-screws, We may therefore, I think, sum up the last phase of Boccaccio's intellect as manifesting an oscillation between the intellectual independence of his maturity and the superstition of his declining years. It is clear to me that for no small portion of his Free-thought Boccaccio was indebted to the influence of Petrarca. Without the support of his master he would long since have fallen a prey to the machinations of such fanatics as Ciani. But though devoid of the mental strength of most of his compeers among Renaissance thinkers, Boccaccio was at heart a truth seeker. In the interests of truth and freedom he opposed the corruptions of the Papacy—in fear of falsehood and under a morbid self-distrust, perhaps engendered by infirm health, he sought the shelter of that system whose manifold turpitudes he had so convincingly exposed. But in both cases, in his skepticism as in his belief; in his sitting at the feet of Petrarca and bowing his head to the monkish tales of Ciani; in his collection of classical manuscripts and his accumulation of ecclesiastical relics; in the strength and wisdom of the *Decameron*, and the weakness of the fatuity of much of his later writings, Boccaccio's conscientiousness is indisputable. The course of true love, when truth itself is the object of pursuit, does not in every case run smooth, any more than it does in the ordinary application of the proverb. Boccaccio must be estimated by his intentions, rather than by actual results. Among his Canzone, probably written about the time of the *Decameron*, there is a very remarkable one, which Dr. Landau well characterizes as 'full of the yearning of a great mind for the possession of the highest truth.' It is an admission of doubt, and a prayer for enlightenment. It reveals a distrust of self, and a dependence on the Eternal Reason that governs the Universe. It breathes that tender wistful aspiration that dis-

[1] *Op. Volg.*, x. pp. 51, 294, etc.

[2] *Op. Volg.*, x. p. 349.

tinguishes so many of the Renaissance Free-thinkers. The poem thus unites in one point of view the combined skepticism and piety which were the governing principles of Boccaccio's character, and which divided between them his life. With it accordingly I conclude my sketch.

'O Glorious Monarch who dost rule the sky
With reason's changeless law; who mortal mind
Alone canst scan, and how frail errors wind
In folds round human thought dost well descry:

Come wing to me thy flight, if humble sigh
Displease thee not. All earthly passions blind
From me remove. Thy wings unto me bind
That I may soar to truths that cannot die.

Take from my dimmèd eyes that blinding veil
Which lets me not perceive my devious way,
From false serenity give me release.
Chase from my breast the frosts which there prevail
And so enkindle it with thy warm ray
That I at last may reach to thy true Peace.'[1]

Luigi Pulci. Every great period of intellectual fermentation will necessarily be marked by violent contrasts and disparities. Principles, feelings, beliefs, customs and interests, not only diverse from but antagonistic to each other, present themselves in all kinds of quaint juxtaposition and connexion. This motley *tout ensemble* affords to the keen-eyed satirical observer, who takes up a standpoint of skeptical indifference in relation to it, rare opportunities for the indulgence of humorous and ironical comment. He takes a grim pleasure in watching the preposterous marriages and grotesque companionships which only the Goddess of Discord herself could have planned. He delights in exposing and exaggerating the weak, strange or comical aspects of grave institutions and pretentious beliefs. This is the position of Pulci in relation to the Renaissance. He represents its humorous and satirical aspect, just as Dante does its mediæval, Petrarca its classical and humanistic, and Boccaccio its popular and literary sides. I have already termed him the Rabelais of the movement; he is also its Cervantes. Don Quixote's burlesque of knight errantry finds an easily recognizable parallel in Pulci's giant Morgante, and the mockery implied in his adventures, of the opinions and customs of chivalrous times. Perhaps Sancho Panza even has his counterpart in Pulci's creation of Margutte. At

[1] Rime xlix., *Op. Volg.*, xvi. p. 71.

any rate, Pulci's great work, the *Morgante Maggiore*, may fairly be described as a serio-comic representation of the Renaissance, with all its manifold activities and heterogeneous products. Here we have depicted its piety and its buffoonery, its superstition and its skepticism, its philosophy and its frivolity, its jest and its earnest. It is natural to compare the work with the *Decameron*. They are companion pictures, representing the same epoch—like a landscape painted from two different standpoints. Boccaccio has re-cast and reclothed the popular tales of the Renaissance. Pulci does the same for its ballads and romantic poetry. But whereas Boccaccio's narrative is simple and direct, and his opinions not difficult of determination, it is almost as hard to define Pulci's real sentiments as it is Rabelais', and for similar reasons. He regards the time, with its weightest concerns, beliefs and opinions, as subjects of mockery and raillery. His audience, moreover, differed considerably from Boccaccio's. The latter was a popular novelist, whose stories were read and enjoyed by every section of society. Pulci was the favoured Poet Laureate—as he might be styled—of Lorenzo di Medici and his magnificent Court. As to the comparative extent of their Freethought, there can be little doubt that Pulci is the greater skeptic; though he also has a vein of devotional feeling underlying his seeming profanity. The similarities between the two champions of mental freedom will appear when we have investigated Pulci further.

In order to this, we must obtain some distinct idea of the only great work associated with his name—*Morgante Maggiore*—Morgante the Great. This work is chiefly taken up with the adventures of Orlando, the celebrated Paladin of Charlemagne's Court, and the hero of so much romantic poetry, Italian and other. But its chief interest is concentrated on a Giant Morgante, who is converted by Orlando, and becomes his Esquire. The addition to his name of 'Great' is probably a sarcasm on Charlemagne himself, who is here depicted as a weak-minded prince. With the adventures of Orlando, and his brother Paladins, of Morgante and some other giants, the intrigues of Charlemagne's court, ending with the famous battle of Roncesvalles, the whole poem is taken up. We need not follow these adventures, which are sometimes grotesque and generally wearisome. For our object it will suffice to catch the peculiar mocking and libertine humour of the author, and the bantering ridicule with which he treats all human opinions and hobbies, not even excepting Skepticism itself.

The first point claiming our attention is the introduction of solemn religious invocations in the first lines of each book, a significant mannerism which has been copied by Voltaire in *La Pucelle*. Thus

he begins the 1st Canto with the first two verses of St. John's Gospel, the 4th with the Gloria in Excelsis, the 6th with the address in the Lord's Prayer, the 10th with the commencement of the Te Deum. In other cantos, also, he addresses, in apparently a half serious half profane manner, the persons of the Trinity, terming Jesus Christ in one place,—

'O Sommo Giove per noi crocifisso,'[1]

While he styles the Virgin, who is the favourite object of his worship,—

'figlia madre e sposa
Di quel Signor.'

This peculiarity is no doubt to be partly explained by the strange medley of Christian and Pagan ideas current at that time, and which we have seen abundantly exemplified in other cases. But in the case of Pulci this feature seems to mean more. It indicates a contemptuous disregard of mere religious phraseology. It betrays the cordial detestation of Cant which is one of his distinguishing attributes. It evinces an inclination to sport with topics perhaps held in undue and superstitious reverence, in order to reduce them to a human level. Leigh Hunt[2] has referred this characteristic to the impartiality of a thorough jester, who permits no exemption from his not ill-intentioned banter; and he very ingeniously illustrates Pulci's religious commencements, with their frequently profane continuations, by a solemn 'grace before meat,' preceded and followed by secular, perhaps frivolous discussion. For our purpose it is one manifestation among many others of Pulci's free-spokenness, as well as an indirect illustration of his joyous large-hearted humanity, which was jealous of all entities, opinions, creeds, and even words which threatened to repress or coerce it to seriousness.

The tone of the book is shown in the first Canto, in which Orlando discovers and converts Morgante. The gigantic Saracen is one of three brothers; and they are introduced as blockading, by slinging stones at, a certain abbey, governed by a holy and simple abbot, who turns out to be a relation of Orlando. When the Paladin arrives at the abbey he knocks at the gate, but for a time cannot obtain admission. At last the abbot appears, and apologises for the delay by the confusion into which the abbey has been thrown by the

[1] It should however be borne in mind that the first person of the Trinity is occasionally styled 'Jove' by some of our early English dramatists. Comp. *e.g.* Dyce's note in his edition of Marlow's works, p. 80.

[2] *Stories from the Italian Poets*, vol. i. p. 293.

perpetual attacks of the giants. 'Our ancient fathers in the church,' he says, 'were rewarded for their holy service, for if they served God well they were also well paid. Don't suppose that they lived altogether upon locusts. It is certain that manna rained upon them from heaven; but here one is regaled with stones, which the giants rain on us from the mountain,—these are our tid-bits and relishes. The fiercest of the three, Morgante, plucks up pines and other great trees by the roots and casts them on us.'[1] While they were thus talking in the cemetery there came a stone as if it would break the back of the Paladin's horse. On which the abbot exclaims, 'For God's sake, come in, Cavalier, the manna is falling.' Orlando undertakes to encounter the giants. After vanquishing and slaying two of them, he is about to attack Morgante, the surviving brother, when he immediately yields himself to the Christian knight, and announces his intention of becoming a Christian. The reason of this sudden conversion is characteristic of Pulci. Morgante confesses that he has had a strange vision, in which he seemed assailed by a serpent. 'I called,' he says, 'upon Mahomet in vain, then I called upon your God who was crucified, and he helped me, and I was delivered from the serpent, so I am ready to become a Christian.' The poem abounds with examples of conversion no less spasmodic and irrational; and it seems impossible to deny that they were intended as satires on the cheap and easy transmutation of Pagans into Christians, of which the latter, both warriors and ecclesiastics, were wont to boast. Morgante not only embraces the Christian faith, he is ready to exemplify its humility by asking pardon of the monks whose abbey he had previously attacked. He also resolves to follow Orlando until death. Before proceeding on their adventures, Orlando talks with Morgante of his slain brothers, and does not disguise his opinion that they are gone to hell. He however consoles Morgante with the promise of eternal felicity in heaven. 'The doctors of our Church,' continued he (I here quote Leigh Hunt's translation[2]), 'are all agreed that if those who are glorified in heaven were to feel pity for their miserable kindred who lie in such horrible confusion in hell, their beatitude would come to nothing; and this you see would plainly be unjust on the part of God. But such is the firmness of their faith that what appears good to him appears good to them. Do what He may they hold it to be done well, and that it is impossible for Him to err, so that if their very fathers and mothers are suffering everlasting punishment it does not disturb them an atom.'

[1] Canto I., Str. 25, 26. Comp. Leigh Hunt, Op. cit., i. p. 320.

[2] *Stories*, etc., i. p. 325.

'Che quel che piace a Dio, sol piace a loro:
Questo s' osserva ne l' eterno coro.'[1]

Morgante cheerfully assents to Orlando's exposition of celestial manners and sentiment. 'Few words for a wise-man,' said Morgante. 'You shall see if I grieve for my brethren, and whether or no I submit to the will of God and behave myself like an angel. So, Dust to dust, and now let us enjoy ourselves. I will cut off their hands, all four of them, and take them to these holy monks, that they may be sure they are dead, and not fear to go out alone into the desert. They will then be certain also that the Lord has purified me and taken me out of darkness, and assured to me the kingdom of heaven.'[2] So saying, the giant cut off the hands of his brethren, and left their bodies to the beasts and birds. No satire against the inhuman theology of Dante on the one hand, and Calvin on the other could be more justifiably severe, or more strongly marked. It is the powerful and eternal plea of the human affections against an assumed tyrannical government of the Universe. No argument could demonstrate more conclusively how the ordinary conception of hell-fire robs Deity of his love and heaven of its loveliness. No proof could be more convincing of the essentially and unscrupulously selfish character of much of the dogma of ecclesiastical Christianity. Orlando and Morgante are in fact typical Christians by whom the dictates of reason, the instincts of human affection are rigidly subordinated to the arbitrary requirements of sacerdotal systems. Christianity, or I should say its ecclesiastical counterfeit, has often insisted, as here, on the dismemberment of our brethren in order to establish our own orthodox faith.

In another remarkable passage a little further on, Pulci satirizes still further the ruling ideas and subjects of Dante's *Inferno*. Orlando and Morgante on their travels arrive at an enchanted castle, where they find a vault with a tomb in it. Out of this proceeded a

[1] Canto I., Str. 52. It is needless to point out the sarcasm of this interpretation of ecclesiastical theology, or its influence as a source of much of the immoral teaching of Romanism. We may compare with it the reply of the rustic, who being questioned as to the meaning of implicit child-like faith, answered, 'When my mother says a thing is so, I must believe it is so, if it isn't so'—words which contain in a nutshell the whole theory of Romanism.

[2] E perchè veggan la mia mente pura
A quel signor, che m'ha il suo regno aperto
E tratto fuor di tenebra si oscura.
E poi tagliò le mani a' duo fratelli,
E lasciagli alle fiere, ed agli uccelli.—Canto I., Str. 54.
Comp. Leigh Hunt, *Stories*, etc., i. p. 327.

voice saying, 'You must encounter with me or stay here for ever. Lift therefore the stone that covers me.'

'Do you hear that?' said Morgante. 'I'll have him out, if it's the Devil himself. Perhaps it's two devils. Filthy-dog and Foul-mouth, or Itching and Evil-tail, (names of devils in Dante).

'Have him out,' said Orlando, 'whoever he is, even were it as many devils as were rained out of heaven into the centre.'

Morgante lifted up the stone, and out leaped a devil in the likeness of a dried-up dead body, black as a coal. Orlando seized him, and the devil in return grappled with Orlando. Morgante was for joining him, but the Paladin bade him keep back. It was a hard struggle, and the devil grinned and laughed, till the giant, who was a master of wrestling, could bear it no longer: so he doubled him up, and in spite of all his efforts thrust him back into the tomb.

The devil however assures Orlando that Morgante's baptism, and his own, and their deliverance, were events dependent on each other. Accordingly, Orlando baptized the giant: whereupon with a mighty noise, the enchanted house disappeared, and Orlando and Morgante were free men.

The giant is so transported with his victory over this single devil that he is inclined to attack the whole diabolical host of the *Inferno*. 'I could find it in my heart,' he said, 'to go down to these same regions below, and make all the devils disappear in like manner. Why shouldn't we do it? We'd set free all the poor souls there. Egad, I'd cut off Minos's tail—I'd pull out Charon's beard by the roots—make a sop of Phlegyas, and a sup of Phlegethon—unseat Pluto—kill Cerberus and the Furies with a punch of the face a-piece —and set Beelzebub scampering like a dromedary.'[1]

If we remember that these and similar passages were recited before Lorenzo di Medicis, we shall have some some idea not only of the freedom of that court in matters of ecclesiastical dogma, but also of the skepticism of the cultured classes, in Florence and elsewhere, with respect to the theology of Dante. Nor is this to be attributed to the impatience of a libertine age with ideas of discipline and retribution. It was rather the repugnance of the human conscience, when free-thought had strengthened its dictates and promoted their independent expression—to a scheme of Divine Providence which comprehended an Inferno like Dante's as part of its plan. Pulci, we shall presently discover, had other and more philosophical theories as to depopulating those Tartarian regions which Dante's sombre imagination had so elaborately colonized.

[1] This is Leigh Hunt's vivacious rendering of the passage. See his *Stories*, etc., i. p. 336.

But there is a curious episode of the *Morgante Maggiore* which especially concerns our subject of Renaissance Free-thought. In the 18th Canto we are introduced to another giant, Margutte, who seems intended by Pulci to typify partly the Paganism, partly the Skepticism of the period. Morgante, journeying to join his master, suddenly falls in with this monster. He accosts him, 'What is your name, traveller?' The other answered, 'My name is Margutte. I intended to be a giant myself, but altered my mind you see and stopped half-way, so that I am only twenty feet or so.' Morgante then asks further, 'Are you Christian or Saracen? Do you believe in Christ or in Mahomet?' In reply, Margutte enounces that cynical admission of unfaith, which the best writers on the Renaissance[1] have accepted as the expression of its extreme Skepticism. 'To tell you the truth,' he answered,—

> 'In black I believe no more than in blue,
> Boil'd or roasted, a capon I hold to be true;
> Sometimes too in butter I also believe,
> And ale, when I cannot get must, I receive
> (While the latter is best when most rough I conceive);
> Above all I hold faith in sound and good wine,
> And the man I deem saved whose belief is like mine.'

Proceeding with the enumeration of his Epicurean tenets he continues,—

> 'I believe in a tart and a tartlet well done,
> The one is the mother the other the son.
> The real pater noster is a good fegatello,[2]
> And these may be three, and two and but one,' etc., etc.

From the satirist's point of view this confession of faith is a not unfair caricature of the excessive sensualism of Pulci's time. The reckless disregard of all truth but what appealed to the animal passions of mankind was not then induced by the demoralization attending such fearful events as the Black Death, but was the fruit of a one-sided and extreme Naturalism. The spirit of which the *Decameron* is an outcome, and which Boccaccio put forward as the main justification of the work, is pourtrayed in the *Morgante*

[1] *e.g.* Bartholmess and Berti in their lives of Giordano Bruno, Prof. Villari in his life of Macchiavelli, Settembrini in his *Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana*, etc.

[2] This dainty which stood so high in Margutte's dietetic Pantheon consisted of chopped liver made into a kind of sausage. In the West of England a similar preparation is still called a 'faggot.'

Maggiore, no doubt with some exaggeration, as the temper of Florentine citizens at the very height of the commercial greatness of their city. The picture is not, nor was it intended to be, attractive. Pulci does not spare Skepticism, any more than he does other diverse forms of earnest conviction. But Margutte, sensual and brutish as he is, is not left without some redeeming trait. With all the vices which he discloses with such extravagant candour,[1] he still possesses one virtue; and that in Pulci's estimation of no little importance. He had never betrayed a comrade.[2] He thus evidences some sense of honour, brotherhood and fidelity. We cannot help being reminded, in the enumeration of Margutte's vices thus qualified by this solitary virtue of a capacity for friendship, that Morgante's good qualities, his sudden conversion, his docile temper, his ready humility were accompanied by an unnatural and unpleasant absence of brotherly feeling, for he showed no compunction in lopping off his brother's hands as a pledge of his Christianity. I have often thought this contrast intended by Pulci to represent the respective merits and demerits of Paganism and Christianity, from his own standpoint of general benevolence. Undoubtedly the tendency of much in ecclesiastical Christianity was to make men selfish and indifferent to the interests of others. On the other hand, there was much in Paganism, or Mahometanism, to bind men together by ties of brotherhood, community of thought, interests, etc. Morgante regards his brother giant's assertion that he had never transgressed the law of friendship as a considerable set off against his general Skepticism; for otherwise as he believed in nothing, he should have compelled him to believe in his bell-clapper—the weapon Morgante was carrying. The two giants pursue their adventures together. Morgante however continually banters and cheats his friend, especially in the matter of eating and drinking. Margutte at last remonstrates. 'I reverence you,' he says, 'in other matters, but in eating you really don't behave well. He who deprives me of my share at meals is no friend. At every mouthful of which he robs me, I seem to lose an eye. I am for sharing everything to a nicety; even if it be no better than a fig, a chestnut, a rat, or a frog.'[3] Morgante answers, 'You are a fine fellow, you gain upon me very much. You are "Il maestro die color che sanno."' This application of Dante's description of Aristotle to the typical but caricatured Skepticism of his own time affords a

[1] Canto xviii., Str. 119-142.

[2] 'Salvo che questo alla fine udirai,
Che tradimento ignun non feci mai.'
Canto xviii., Str. 142.

[3] Canto xviii., Str. 198.

good illustration of Pulci's grotesque humour. Certainly it was not Aristotle nor any system of definite knowledge, that could in Pulci's own circle claim a 'mastership.' 'Those who knew' were for the most past eager to disclaim all knowledge of a positive kind, and many of them, in the spirit of Margutte, confined all their thoughts and aspirations to mundane enjoyments. Pulci's burlesque rendering of Dante's serious phrase gives also a measure of the progress of the Renaissance during the last two centuries. The classicalism of the thirteenth had given way to the complete intellectual independence of the fifteenth century; and the progressive emancipation was accompanied by a humorous estimate of the chief agencies that co-operated in its production.

Another feature of Pulci's immediate environment, and of the Italy of the fourteenth century, is illustrated by Margutte's death. This is in complete harmony with the recklessness of his life. He literally explodes in a fit of inextinguishable laughter on witnessing the grimaces of a monkey who had found his boots and was pulling them on and off.[1] He is thus an apt symbol of the perpetual irrepressible ridicule which a sensual age and a one-sided culture bestowed on all topics alike.[2] The lesson is emphasized by Margutte's destiny:

'Ei ride ancora, e riderà in eterna.'

Pulci himself is, in this respect, an admirable exponent of the Age and of its jesting temper. There are few crazes or enthusiasms of Florence under Lorenzo of which he does not present the 'seamy side.' He ridicules *e.g.* the Academy instituted by Lorenzo for the cultivation of the Greek language. With the appreciation of individual liberty which is the primary necessity of every free-thinker, together with the somewhat distinct quality best described as Bohemianism, Pulci holds aloof from that and every other institution which might have had the effect of conventionalizing himself or his wayward literary moods. His own Academe and Gymnasia—the source and guide of his poetic inspiration—were wild woods and secluded bosky dells.[3] He sneers also at the pedantry and exclusiveness which attended the revival of Greek Literature, and the over-acted enthusiasm of the Florentine Platonists—the chief literary Cants of his age. Nor is he a whit more merciful to the learned discussions of university professors and popular teachers, especially

[1] Canto xix., Str. 147–149.

[2] 'Oh questi,' says Settembrini, 'questi è veramente l' uomo di quel secolo, è l' Italiano che ride di tutto, che perderà tutto, anche la libertà, e morirà ridendo come Margutte.'—*Lezioni di Lett. Ital.*, i. p. 330.

[3] Comp. *Morgante*, Canto xxv., Str. 116–117.

when their themes appeared impractical and insoluble. When *e.g.* the whole of Italy was agitated by the controversy on Immortality, originally provoked by Pomponazzi's work on the subject, Pulci's characteristic contribution to the discussion consisted of a burlesque ode on some of the theories mooted, which equals in irreverence anything to be found in Rabelais.[1] But with all his contemptuous indifference for serious topics, and his irrepressible desire to prick with the keen point of raillery some of the inflated and gaseous bladders which in that as in every other age would willingly pass themselves off as solid bodies, Pulci was by no means a thoughtless man. His universal jest was not the outcome of mental vacuity, but the instinctive reflex action of primary ingredients in his creed. In the first place all his convictions of Deity, of Nature, of Man were optimistic. The next thought of his theology is found in the definition of God with which he commences the sixth Canto of the Morgante—

> 'O Padre nostro che ne' cieli stai
> Non circumscritto,[2] ma per più amore
> Ch' a' primi effeti di lassù tu hai'—

a definition which however incomplete, is more in harmony with the teachings of Christianity, as well as with the prime instincts of humanity than Dante's Creator of the Inferno. His scheme of Redemption contemplates the salvation of the whole human race, a theory which he places on the broad grounds of divine justice; and his charity, like that of Origen, embraces, as a possible contingency, the ultimate salvability of the fallen angels. But it is part of Pulci's humour that his most cherished opinions are frequently placed in the mouth of the most incongruous of his characters. His own Skepticism, and that of his age—the brilliant and æsthetic Epicureanism of the court of Lorenzo—is typified by the sensuous creed of a gigantic Caliban, who occupies the debateable territory between man and brute. A grave discussion on free will takes place between an enchanter and a devil with, it must be averred, as much reasonableness and anti-diabolical judgment as could have been expected from two philosophers. A debate on Christian doctrine takes place, under cir-

[1] See this sonnet in Prof. Fiorentino's *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 154. It is translated and commented on in M. Albert Castelnau's *Les Medicis*, vol. i. p. 429.

[2] Comp. Dante:—*Par.*, Canto xiv.

> 'Quell' uno, e due, e tre, che sempre vive
> Non circonscritto, e tutto circonscrive.'

The contrast between the elder poet's attention to dogmatic formulæ, and Pulci's stress upon human instincts is instructive.

cumstances hardly suggestive of reverence between a Christian knight and his Saracen mistress; while his best exponent of theology is a thoughtful, mild, and philosophic devil. This last character, Ashtaroth, seems to me one of the most interesting, albeit diabolical, in the whole gallery of the *Morgante*. In an argument with the enchanter Malgigi, he lays down distinctly the subordination of the Son to the Father in the doctrine of the Trinity. His reason being:—

'Colui che tutto fè, sa il tutto solo,
E non sa ogni cosa il suo figliuolo.' [1]

The enchanter, like some popular divines in the English Church, is scandalized at an interpretation of the doctrine, which is indubitably that of the earliest Church, whereupon this most orthodox and scriptural of devils:—

'Disse Astarotte tu non hai ben letto
La Bibbia, e par mi con essa poco uso
Che, interrogato del gran dì il figliuolo
Disse che il Padre lo sapeva solo.' [2]

Ashtaroth has the task imposed on him of conveying one of Charlemagne's Paladins (Rinaldo) from Egypt; to take part in the great battle of Roncesvalles. He does this by taking possession of his horse which thereupon soars through the air with him in a straight line towards the valley of Roncesvalles. On their way the wise devil instructs Rinaldo in different subjects of religion, philosophy, and physical science. Passing *e.g.* the Pillars of Herakles, he ridiculed the notion that nothing was to be found beyond them, 'for' said he, 'the earth is round and the sea has an even surface all over it; and there are nations on the other side of the globe who walk with their feet opposed to yours, and worship other gods than the Christians, as *e.g.* the Sun and Jupiter and Mars.'

It is difficult to find, in any time prior to Columbus, a more distinct assertion of the existence of the Antipodes. The effect of the communication upon Rinaldo is to awaken curiosity respecting the salvability of races so far removed from the limits of Christendom. He immediately asks if these can be saved? The answer of the humane Ashtaroth is instructive and might advantageously be laid to heart by the bulk of Christian teachers, whether Catholic or Protestant. 'Do you take the Redeemer for a partizan, and imagine he died for you only? Be assured he died for the whole world, Antipodes and all. Perhaps not one soul will be left out of the pale of salvation at last;

[1] Canto xxv., Str. 136. [2] Canto xxv., Str. 141.
[3] Canto xxv., Str. 229–231.

but the whole human race will adore the truth, and find mercy. The Christian is the only true religion; but heaven accepts all goodness that believes honestly, whatsoever the belief may be.'[1] If, as seems certain, we are at liberty to take these words as an epitome of Pulci's creed, we may I think credit him, notwithstanding his raillery, with possessing a far correcter notion of the mission of Christianity and its relation to humanity than he could have derived from the decrees of Ecclesiastical Councils and the writings of the Fathers. Nor is his ascription of such humane and genuinely Christian sentiment to a devil so incongruous as at first sight it might seem. Indeed Pulci appears to me to have invested his conception of Ashtaroth with more *vraisemblance* than any of the great creators of dramatic and poetic devils, *e.g.* Dante, Milton and Goethe, for he has allowed the existence not only in intellect, but in feeling, of some relics of those celestial sentiments that animated them in their pre-fallen condition. Ashtaroth's own plea for the retention of feelings so anti-diabolical is pathetic and would have strongly moved the compassionate heart of Sterne's Uncle Toby. 'Do not suppose' he says 'that nobleness of spirit is lost among us denizens of the nether regions. You know what the proverb says, There's never a fruit however degenerate but will taste of its stock. I was of a different order of beings once and . . . but it is as well not to talk of happy times.'[2] Rinaldo parts

[1] Canto xxv., Str. 233 and 234:—Comp. also Str. 235 and 236.

'Dunque sarebbe partigiano stato
In questa parte il vostro Redentore
Che Adam per voi quassù fussi formato
E crucifisso lui per vostro amore:
Sappi ch' ognun per la Croce è salvato;
Forse che 'l vero dopo lungo errore
Adorerete tutti di concordia
E troverrete ognun misericordia.

Basta che sol la vostra Fede è certa
E la Vergine è in Ciel glorificata;
Ma nota che la porta è sempre aperta,
E insino a quel gran dì non fia serrata
E chi farà col cor giusta l' offerta,
Sarà questa olocausta accettatà
Chè molto piace al Ciel la obbedienzia,
E timore, osservanzia e reverenzia.

[2] Canto xxvi., Str. 83.

'Non creder, nello inferno anche fra noi
Gentilezza non sia; sai che si dice,
Che in qualche modo, un proverbio fra voi,
Serba ogni pianta della sua radice,
Benchè sia tralignato il frutto poi;—
Or non parliam qui del tempo felice.'

from his (nominally) infernal mentor with every expression of good will. It seems as if he were parting from a brother; he is convinced that 'Gentilezza, amicizia, e cortesia' are not unknown among devils; and he promises to pray that not only Ashtaroth, but every other member of the Satanic legions may repent and obtain the divine pardon.[1]

These glimpses are sufficient to reveal the kindly tolerant freedom which underlies so much of what seems whimsical and bizarre in Pulci's thought. His true character can indeed only be arrived at by placing the flowers of his wit, the aromatic and bitter herbs of his jest and satire, in the alembic of critical and scrutinizing research and thus distilling their fragrant spirit. An inveterate foe of everything like cant and pretension, Pulci takes pleasure, as did Rabelais, in veiling under grotesque symbols and hiding in obscure and improbable corners his own genuine sentiments. Perhaps it was not only his humoristic standpoint, but a genuine insight into the time, that impelled him to dress up truth in motley, as if he had thought that her own naked loveliness was more than the ignorant prudery and purblind vision of men would bear—but not the less lovingly does he regard her in the quaint and fanciful costumes with which his sportive tenderness has invested her. As regards the current beliefs of his time, Pulci is a skeptic. For the ordinary dogmata of the Romish Church, especially when sombre, inhuman, ascetic, and sordidly selfish; or else elaborately speculative and unpractical, he had scant respect. On the other hand he is taken with those aspects of it which appear kindly, gentle and humane, or else beautiful and artistic. That he appreciated simplicity in religious service is shown by the advice of Archbishop Turpin to the dying Orlando. For when the great Paladin was about to utter a formal confession of faith previous to receiving absolution, Turpin prevents him by saying 'A single Pater Noster or Miserere, or if you will a Peccavi is enough.' His chief conception of Deity, as we have seen, is illimitable love; and this single idea is of itself sufficient to dispel sacerdotal terrorism, and make the Inferno of Dante and the Church a figment more insubstantial than the most shadowy of its suffering shades. Love being his only notion of Deity, his sole idea of human duty correspondingly resolves itself into benevolence. There is a kindliness in his very banter, and a tenderness in his severest raillery, which

[1] Canto xxvi., Str. 85:—

'E quel Signor, che la mia legge adora,
Prego, se 'l prego dovessi valere,
Chi vi perdoni, e che ciascun si penti,
Chè ristorar non vi posso altrimenti.'

render Pulci the most loveable among the great poets of the Renaissance. The editor of the *Parnaso Italiano*, speaking of this quality, says 'that the student of Italian literature will adore Ariosto and admire Tasso but will love Pulci.'[1] How far he carried his jesting Skepticism beyond the fair limits of religious cant and conventional pretence it is not easy to say. If he carried it to the extreme excess with which he is sometimes charged, we must remember that libertinism, religious and ethical, was a characteristic both of his age and of the society in which he moved. The most irreligious among his minor works are the sonnets in which he ridicules unsparingly the clergy, ecclesiastical miracles, the methods and conclusions of metaphysics, but even here Pulci is more anti-clerical than anti-Christian, and it is only fair to accept, as a 'set off' against his sonnets, the work which bears the name of his confessions, wherein he recanted some of his freer opinions. That the author of the *Morgante* should have suffered some inconvenience from the promulgation of his tolerant free-thinking opinions is only what we might have expected. He died at the commencement of the reaction which set in about the close of the fifteenth century against the Renaissance, and his body was refused admission into consecrated ground; but Pulci's fame as the Father of Italian Romantic Poetry was not likely to suffer from such unworthy exhibitions of sacerdotal malignity.

Machiavelli. I have chosen Machiavelli as the statesman of the Renaissance to illustrate the combined effect of all those influences, religious, humanistic, naturalistic, philosophical and literary which characterize it. His name and writings will supply us with an approximate answer to the following problem: Given a period of Free-thought in which religious restraints have become weakened, in which ancient sources of authority, political as well as social, are impaired, in which literature has become libertine, in which natural rights and instincts assert themselves in an imperious and unregulated manner, in which individualism has acquired a somewhat obtrusive character—what will be the aim and teaching of a politician who is himself the creature of all these influences; but who, to maintain the solidarity of political and social institutions, is compelled to react against them? We are therefore adopting, both with Machiavelli and Guicciardini, a different standpoint from that to which the literary leaders of the Renaissance have introduced us. Our present attitude to the Italy of the fifteenth century is that of

[1] Leigh Hunt, *Stories*, etc., i. p. 297, who adds, 'And all minds in which lovingness produces love will agree with him.'

thoughtful statesmen, philosophical historians and practised diplomatists—men who apply the culture of their time to questions affecting the organizations of nations, churches and societies, where free-thought is not a mere individual peculiarity, but a principle underlying their policy, and colouring their conceptions of contemporary history. The change is the same as that which the student of our Elizabethan age experiences who turns from the study of Shakespere, and Ben Jonson to the pages of Bacon and Sir Walter Raleigh.

Machiavelli's life is interesting as being in an unusual degree the practical embodiment of his writings. In its various vicissitudes, in the way he encountered them, in the motives and principles which regulated his action, and which he lays bare with cynical indifference, may be read the vivified personification of the rules of human conduct contained in his works. His life however we must pass over. As to his character, its chief points will be brought out sufficiently for our purpose, by considering his attitude:—

1. To the Renaissance and Pagandom.
2. To the Church and Christianity.
3. To Political Science.
4. To Skepticism.

i. Machiavelli is not ordinarily classed among the pure humanists of the Renaissance. This is partly because he belongs to the later stages of the movement, and partly because his excessive reverence for antiquity obscured his perception of the real significance of its revival. He almost entirely ignores the literature of the Renaissance. Its foremost leaders, Petrarca and Boccaccio, are hardly mentioned by him. The author whom he most prizes, as his Italian master, is Dante; though his imitations of him occasionally take the form of burlesque.[1] He displays little or no interest in the scientific progress, or the artistic revival, which marked the Italy of the sixteenth century. He is indifferent to the great geographical discoveries which then aroused the attention of Europe, and in which his friend Guicciardini manifested such enthusiastic interest. On the other hand he is a devout disciple of ancient thought, an impassioned admirer of every form of classical culture. From the very commencement of his education he read with zest every Latin author known to his contemporaries, and also studied the philosophers and historians of Greece. His works are imitations, often servile, of what he esteemed the best models of ancient literature. His comedies are adaptations of those of Plautus and Terence. His comic and satiric writings are based on Lucian and Apuleius. His histories are

[1] As *e.g.* in his *Asino d'oro.*

modelled on Livy, Tacitus and Polybius, and his political science is largely indebted to Greek and Roman history. Incidental quotations occur in his writings even of the then less known classical authors, such as Pindar and Euripides. His mind is impregnated with Pagan ideas and opinions, just as his language is moulded by classical turns of expression and grammatical forms. The Renaissance, for him, was not the renewal of the old life, in the same manner as the child is the offspring of its parent, combining sameness of type with difference of individuality—the spirit of antiquity recast in the mould of the modern world; it was rather the veritable 'resurrection of the dead' —the actual resuscitation of ancient institutions, laws and modes of thought. Machiavelli's worship of antiquity, for it was little else, is instructively depicted in the oft quoted letter in which he describes his daily pursuits when in exile. Writing from his rural retreat, which was also his patrimony, he tells his friend Vettori how he is in the habit of rising with the sun, and going into one of his plantations which he is having cut down. There he remains two hours examining the work done on the evening before and amusing himself with the woodmen, who have always a crow to pluck either among themselves or with their neighbours. Quitting the wood, he proceeds to a fountain, and from thence to his paretajo,[1] with a book under his arm, either Dante or Petrarca, or one of those poets called minor, as Tibullus or Ovid. He there reads of their amorous passions and recalls his own. After enjoying for a time these pleasant reveries, he next wends his way to the roadside inn, and chats with the passers by, asking the news of their several countries. Thereby he learns a great number of things; besides which he loves to observe the diversity which exists in the tastes and ideas of men.

When the dinner hour arrives he sits down with his troop (his wife and children), and eats those provisions which his poor farm and wretched patrimony produces. Dinner over, he retires to the inn, where commonly he finds the host, a butcher, a miller, and two charcoal-burners. With these companions he peasantizes himself in playing a game of *cricca* or *tric-trac*. Thence arise a thousand disputes accompanied by angry words, so that their voices are heard as far as San Casciano. Employed in these ignoble occupations, Machiavelli prevents his brain from getting mouldy. When evening comes he returns to his house, he enters his study, but on the threshold he divests himself of his peasant clothes covered with mud and dirt, and dons his official garments; and thus decently attired, he enters

[1] A favourite pastime with the rural gentry of Tuscany. For a full account of it, see A. F. Artaud's *Machiavel*, vol. i., p. 254, n. 1.

the ancient courts of the men of old.[1] Received by them with affection he feasts himself on the nourishment they supply—the only food which agrees with him and for which he is born. He does not fear to speak with them, and (this is noteworthy) to demand the reason of their actions. They, full of courtesy as they are, answer his enquiries. Thus employed, he does not feel, even for four hours, any ennui, he forgets every source of disturbance, he no longer fears poverty, and death terrifies him not. He feels himself entirely transported in their society; and as Dante says[2] there can be no knowledge unless one retains what one has acquired, he is careful to take notes of what is most remarkable in their conversation. . . .

I have quoted this passage at length because it not only throws a light on the intensity of his passion for ancient literature, and his method of studying it, but also affords us some glimpses into his personal character. At first sight we are naturally reminded of the half-studious, half-desultory life of Montaigne. There is in both cases the same relish for the conversation, tastes and amusements of peasants, the same contempt for mere social distinction; but in Machiavelli's case the philosophical serenity of which he boasts is only half earnest. Montaigne voluntarily retired from the society of the court, and political affairs, to the seclusion of his study and his rural occupations; Machiavelli's retirement, on the other hand, was altogether involuntary; and he was miserable and restless so long as his enforced leisure lasted. Montaigne, in short, was a philosopher pure and simple; Machiavelli a born diplomatist and politician, with philosophical and literary tastes superinduced on that basis. Indeed a phrase in the passage just quoted, in which he avows that his researches into classical authors consisted of an investigation into human motives, is an incidental proof that Machiavelli's interest in antiquity was not wholly or even mainly that of the scholar—it was rather that of the earnest student of men and social institutions. The purport of this remark is amply attested by all his political and historical works. Everywhere there is manifested the same scope and purpose—the supreme desire to watch those motive influences by which men are governed, societies formed and consolidated, and political power administered. Hence the field of heathen antiquity

[1] 'Povero Niccolo!' exclaims Professor Settembrini in reference to this trait, 'ti fanno andare a studio come gl' Inglesi vanno a tavola in abito nero e cravatta bianca.' *Lezioni di Lett. Ital.*, ii. 136 note.

[2] *Parad*, Canto v.:—

'Apri la mente a quel ch' io ti paleso
E formalvi entro; che non fa scienza,
Senza lo ritenere, avere inteso.'

Machiavelli employed as a collection of precedents and illustrations, to be applied, so far as difference of circumstances permitted, to the political events and persons of his own time. It was a garden of simples whence he might cull those best adapted to the diseases and emergencies of Italian states in the sixteenth century. As a consequence of the excess of political over literary interest, in his classical as well as his general studies, the culture of Machiavelli always partook of a certain narrowness both of conception and sympathy. His humanism was almost totally destitute of what I should call the Hellenic elements of the Renaissance, *i.e.* the love of speculation for its own sake, the cultivation of truth, wisdom, and in a word, intellectual perfection, regarded as attributes of the individual rather than as the qualities of a political unit, the artistic feeling for and perception of beauty—which we find in the leading minds both of ancient Greece and of the Italian Renaissance, as *e.g.* Petrarca and Boccaccio. The only portion of Greek history for which Machiavelli seems to have felt any enthusiasm was the short-lived glory of Athens; though he was too short-sighted to appreciate adequately the combination of political freedom with high culture which was the distinguishing feature of that oasis in human history. But it was on ancient Rome, her government, institutions and sovereignty, that Machiavelli lavished his warmest admiration. For the conduct of her leading spirits, whether Imperial or Republican, for the genius and strategy of her successful generals, for the unequalled prudence and administrative talent of her foremost statesmen—in a word, for the combination of irresistible power and unscrupulous cunning which marked her history, he felt the profoundest reverence. It was the embodiment in actual history of the political principles he himself advocated, as being imperiously demanded by the exigences of his own time. Regarded from this standpoint, the Renaissance was to Machiavelli a political movement, or rather congeries of movements, all tending in the same direction. The revival of ancient learning and of ancient freedom of speculation were subordinated in his estimation to the revivification of the maxims of statecraft, and rules of conduct, that animated the leaders and influenced the people of Old Rome. The ideal object of the excitation and stir in human thought, as conceived in his own warm and patriotic imagination, was not indeed the establishment of the Universal Holy Roman Empire of which Dante and Petrarca dreamed. Machiavelli's acquaintance with politics was of too practical a kind to permit the indulgence of such fantastic aspirations. His more restrained fancy and larger experience were confined to the expectation, or rather the dim hope, of witnessing the formation and consolidation of a United Italy—the worthy peer of

the best of existing European sovereignties. Unhappily this day-dream of a genuine patriot was not destined to be realized for more than three centuries after his death.

But although Machiavelli's interest in antiquity, and his classical studies, were those of a politician, it would be wrong to assume that his general character was uncoloured by the spirit of Pagandom; on the contrary, notwithstanding an overt profession of Christianity, his conceptions both of theology and morality were largely leavened by the opinions of the ancients. His Deity was only partially the God of Christians—the sovereign of Olympus shares to an equal extent his reverence. The general idea underlying the name is with him, as with most Italian thinkers of his time, mixed up with conceptions of chance, fortune, fate, etc. The virtues he admires, and which he puts in the forefront of his political teachings, are almost exclusively those of Roman Paganism—the attributes of human strength, courage and endurance, self-reliance and audacity, qualified in needful conjuncture by treachery, cunning and duplicity. For the gentler passive attributes pertaining to Christianity, Machiavelli cherished, as we shall find, an undisguised contempt; though it is not easy to reconcile this feeling with his equally undoubted appreciation of Christ's own teaching before it had been corrupted by ecclesiasticism. His principles were further those of Roman Paganism in the respect that he was an unswerving worshipper of success, and thought that the end justified the means. Of a similar kind was the feature which he shared with all his skeptical contemporaries—I mean the limitation of his thoughts, interests and aspirations to the present world. To a great extent also he is guilty of substituting earthly renown for the Christian doctrine of immortality. Other aspects of his Paganism will meet us further on.

ii. Turning to Machiavelli's attitude to the Church, we may observe that it resembles his standpoint to Paganism in being altogether political. He has no conception of, or at least no interest in, religion as a mode of philosophy or speculation. He is utterly indifferent to any relation it may be supposed to have to abstract truth. With him it is a mere question of practical utility and political science. Considered from that standpoint his opinion of Christianity, nay of every religion, is eminently favourable. He is fully persuaded that no state can exist without the binding force of sacred and supernatural sanctions; and he is no less certainly convinced that vice and irreligion entail the inevitable ruin of a community.[1] These general principles he affirms again and again.

[1] *Disc.*, i. chap. 11 (Op., ii. p. 65). 'E come la osservanza de lculto Divino è cagione della grandezza delle Republiche; così il dispregio di quello è cagione

But religion, to be perfect in his eyes, ought to have a directly political purpose. Its interests, sanctions, deterrents ought to be so directed as to produce a feeling of patriotism. It is because Roman polytheism attained this object in a manner so admirable that Machiavelli commends it, as his ideal of a politician's religion. False and idolatrous as it intrinsically was, it ministered to the political aspirations and destiny of the people. It was intermingled with every act and object of public life. By the sacred motive-power it supplied men became disinterested patriots, zealous statesmen, invincible generals and brave soldiers. It formed the vitalizing principle of the whole community—the salt of public life. The real founder of the Roman power was not Romulus, but Numa.[1] The former only gave it laws, the latter gave it a religion and worship. The first taught his subjects war; the other, refinement, gentleness and the arts of social life. The most illustrious of all rulers of men have been those who knew how to combine the sacredness of priestly functions with the material power of secular rule, as *e.g.* Solon and Lycurgus.[2]

In the sixteenth century there was only one ecclesiastical institution that could claim the position of the religion of Italy—the Papacy. The relation of this spiritual power to the various Italian states, its influence on the political and ethical principles of the people, were subjects which were continually obtruded on the attention of Machiavelli in his political and diplomatic career. The result of this observation in his case, as in that of Guicciardini, was a profound conviction of the baneful effects of Romanism regarded from a political point of view. The Church, he maintains, had ruined Italy, and grafted upon her people every kind of vice and turpitude.[3] Instead of acting as its ostensible mission suggested, as a peace-making coalescing agent, unifying the various states into which the country was divided, it fostered their mutual jealousies, and stirred up intestine warfare among them, in order to profit by their divisions. The example of greed, selfishness and rapacity it thus promulgated sank deeply into the character of the people; nor was the open contempt for their religion on the part of the clergy a less powerful source of incalculable mischief. The guardians of public and private virtue had become in no respect better than open purveyors of vice. The logical effect of some of the doctrines of Romanism in producing

della rovina di esse.' (The Edition of his collected works here referred to is that of Milan, 1805, in 10 volumes.)

[1] *Discorsi*, book i., chap. 11.

[2] *Discorsi*, book i., chap. 10.

[3] *Dicorsi Liv.*, book i., ch. 12. Nourisson in his *Machiavel* has attempted to reply to this indictment. See p. 257.

a contempt for morality was a subject which Machiavelli had studied both as a politician and a dramatist. Few more powerful representations of the perverse casuistry by which the profligate cleric of the sixteenth century was accustomed to justify his vices exist than the characters of Brother Timothy in the 'Mandragora' or Brother Alberic in the 'anonymous Comedy,' both prototypes of Molière's Tartuffe.

That Machiavelli's contempt for Papal Christianity never passed into an open rupture with the system, or even a denial of its main teachings, is clear both from his writings and from the scenes that took place around his deathbed. The speculative doctrines of Romanism he did not so much contradict as ignore. They only came within his scope as a student of humanity and social institutions; and it was not easy to predicate the effect which the dogma, *e.g.* of the Trinity, would have on a man's feelings, duties and aspirations regarded merely as a citizen. The pretended thaumaturgic powers of the priesthood, ecclesiastical miracles, etc., he ridiculed, though he was not, any more than Guicciardini, Benvenuto Cellini and other eminent contemporaries, free from the imputation of superstition. But in truth it was not to Christianity, but to its Papal development, that Machiavelli was opposed. Like others among our free-thinkers, he recognised the truth and power of the Gospel while he characteristically makes its main excellence political or social. These are his words on the subject:—"La quale Religione se ne' Principi della Repubblica Cristiana si fusse mantenuta, secondo che dal datore d'essa ne fu ordinato, sarrebbero gli Stati e le Repubbliche Cristiane più unite e più felici assai ch' elle non sono."[1] Of course the *prima facie* intention of these words is a transference to political states and institutions of the fundamental law of Christian brotherhood; but in the case of Machiavelli they imply more than this. They evince an accurate perception of other attributes of Christ's teaching. Like other Republican legists, he saw that the individualism which lay at the root of that teaching, and was implied in the immediate relation of every man to God, was itself an invaluable guarantee for freedom and political independence. Probably also he laid stress on the moral purity of the Gospel; for he was undoubtedly of opinion that virtue, if it possessed no other good tendencies or results, was a valuable means both of attaining and preserving liberty: it was therefore, like religion, a useful political agent, and this was the highest function, in Machiavelli's estimation, that any person or attribute could possess. Doubtless also Machiavelli, who was a true hero worshipper, was impressed by the grandeur of Christ's personality—the wonder-

[1] *Dicorsi Liv.*, i., ch. 12. Opere, vol. ii. p. 69.

ful sway he exercised over the minds of men. Those who manifested that faculty, by means of force or craft, he regarded with reverence; and in his lucid intervals, he was not so utterly indifferent to the superiority of spiritual or moral forces as to withhold the tribute due to them when they proved the equals of physical power or intellectual astuteness. His well known depreciation of Christianity contrasted with Roman Paganism as laying too much stress upon the passive virtues, refers in my opinion to its Papal development. The Papacy had insisted on submissiveness and intellectual abnegation in order to further her own sacerdotal pretensions and her selfish aggrandisement. Machiavelli was not opposed to humility and gentleness as religious virtues, provided they were not carried to a suicidal excess. This is shown by his eulogy of SS. Dominic and Francis for having brought back Christianity to its primary form, as well as by his opinion that the fundamentals of Christian teaching should be interpreted in the direction of manly energy, not in that of slavish idleness.[1] On the whole, while believing in the efficacy of religion as a political instrument, and appreciating the merits of original Christianity, Machiavelli was a disbeliever as to its later developments. Perhaps we ought not to attach too much importance even to his admiration of Christ's teaching. Any religionist who could move men was certain of his deference. The terms *e.g.* in which he speaks of Christ he applies also to Savonarola. The latter too, wielded an enormous mastery over men to which Machiavelli did willing homage. As to whether the eloquent friar of San Marco was right or wrong he would offer no opinion. A mountebank, who could stir and guide the vacillating mob of Forence as Savonarola did would have been equally certain of Machiavelli's respect.

iii. But our chief concern with Machiavelli, as a skeptic, relates to his political principles. These were based, in his own case, as they must be in every similar case, on his estimate of humanity and social existence. As is well known, this is painfully derogatory and pessimistic. If he did not affirm, in the spirit of a writer of our own times, that the world was tenanted by so many millions 'mostly fools,' it was only because he conceived that there was among them an equal proportion of knaves. The source whence he derived this depreciatory estimate of his fellow-men had no relation, as in Calvin's case, to theological dogma. His authorities were twofold—history and experience. On the one hand he studied the records of ancient history, on the other he reflected, in his customary cold cynical

[1] 'La Religione Cristiana avendoci nostra la verità e la vera via, deve interpretarsi secondo la virtu e non secondo l' ozio.'

manner, on the political affairs in which he had been mixed up both as secretary and ambassador of the Florentine Republic. His historical investigations did not induce Skepticism as to the veracity of the records. He did not rise from the perusal of Tacitus, Polybius and Livy with the healthy distrust of Dr. Johnson: 'Our knowledge of history is confined to a few facts and dates—the colouring being conjectural.' Still less did he concur in Horace Wapole's emphatic verdict: 'Tell me not of history, for that I know to be false.' Machiavelli's inference was, practically, the far more mischievous one. 'Tell me not of humanity for that I know to be false.' Throughout the whole of history the same melancholy phenomena seemed to his morbid vision to present themselves with unvarying sameness. Everywhere and always the weak were the prey of the strong. The more powerful and astute the ruler, the greater the sway he exercised. The same truth held good in war. It was a question not of truth, justice and humanity, but altogether of superiority of force and strategy. Providence to him, as to Napoleon, was ever on the side of the strongest battalions. Nor were these lessons of the past likely to lose their efficacy by a consideration of the events of his own time. Out of the commotions and conflicts of different Italian states one truth emerged with unmistakable distinctness; and that was that the success of rulers stood in a direct relation to the material force at their command, and the skill and address by which that force was wielded. The result, as a matter of course, was ethical and social skepticism of the most marked kind—the enouncement of principles which have consigned the name of Machiavelli to an Inferno which is likely to be as eternal as literature itself. His work named the *Prince* is thus an exposition of his principles as a statesman and as a skeptic.[1] The ideal Ruler therein depicted was an incongruous combination of lion and fox. His subjects were either to be caressed or destroyed. The relation posited between them was not altogether unlike that between the wolf and the sheep. All notions of humanity, gentleness and mutual sympathy were regarded, in relation to the object aimed, at as little better than sentimentalism. The main exception was that the ruler might employ kindness instead of coercion, and moral instead of material persuasion, always provided that the latter methods were found equally efficacious. The chief consideration for him was

[1] The true significance of this work, both with respect to the author, and to the political theories and history of modern Europe, has recently received much new light from students of Machiavelli: see, especially, Villari's *Life and Times*, Eng. Trans., vol. ii. pp. 200–243; and Mr. Burd's new edition of *Il Principe*, with Introductions by himself and Lord Acton.

success, clear, certain, speedy and permanent—all the rest was matter of detail and comparatively unimportant.

Attempts have been made by various apologists to defend Machiavelli's political Skepticism. Some have asserted that, like Montaigne, he was actuated merely by a spirit of excessive candour; others that his intention was to describe what men were accustomed, as distinct from what they ought, to do. But a more recondite method is that suggested by Rousseau, who transforms his maxims of unscrupulous tyranny into an ironical defence of liberty and republicanism. According to this theory his advice to the despot how to coerce and enslave his subjects is really intended to show the patriot the road to freedom. Unfortunately however the exhortations are too direct, too precise, too unqualified and too frequent to allow of such ingenious hypotheses. Besides, as Macaulay in his well known essay has pointed out, obliquity of moral vision is a feature pertaining not to one but to all his writings. The same writer adds, 'we doubt whether it would be possible to find in all the many volumes of his compositions a single expression indicating that dissimulation and treachery had ever struck him as being discreditable.' No, whatever reprobation may attach to the fact, Machiavelli's recommendation of political duplicity and tergiversation, of unscruplous and ruthless cruelty, is as sincere as the counsel of a pious father-confessor to some weeping penitent. There is even a conscious innocency in his inculcation of the most flagrant breaches of trust, honour and fidelity, which, if it cannot avail to sanction them, serves to prove the good faith of the teacher. Nor is this surprising. Machiavelli's *Prince* is a genuine and unexaggerated type of the rulers of his time. It has been said that he derived its maxims, as an immediate source, from a contemplation of the duplicity, cunning and remorseless treachery of Cæsar Borgia. It is truer, I think, to say that the policy he enunciated, and Borgia practised, was derived from the scheming ambition and perfidious cruelty of the Church itself. I wonder no one has written an apology for Cæsar Borgia grounded on his ecclesiastical education and surroundings. Certainly no treachery was ever planned by that historical monstrosity, no duplicity practised, no crime perpetrated, but had its counterpart in principles and acts sanctioned by the selfish ambition of the Holy See. His own nefarious life, the lives of other Italian princes, hardly less criminal, were only a transference to secular politics of the mingled astuteness and cruelty which had received their blasphemous beatification at the hands of the vicegerents of Christ. Lying, duplicity, cruelty, cupidity had long been elevated to the rank of theological virtues, and all that Borgia did, or Machiavelli inculcated, was to pursue that policy in secular matters, to its logical

outcome. Nor was this transference difficult. There was no such distinction in the minds of Renaissance thinkers as would have made the principles accepted in one inapplicable to the other. The temporal Empire was held to be, in its foundation and design, as sacred as the Papacy. This conning of his lesson from the precepts and example of the Church explains the nature of the reception which his contemporaries awarded to Machiavelli's *Prince*. That which especially arrested their attention in the work was not so much the character of the teaching as the brutal cynicism with which it was avowed. That cruelty and treachery might be legitimately used in inculcating dogma, or for the aggrandisement of the Church, was a long accepted dictum of Papal policy. That a similar policy was adapted to the establishment of a despotism over the temporal interests of man had been experimentally demonstrated by many Italian princes. But neither the spiritual nor the secular ruler had ever cared to divulge, in the form of overt propositions, their real mainsprings of action. This was just what Machiavelli did. The measures which Pope and Prince had adopted for the complete subjugation of their subjects—all the hideous and intricate mechanism of unlimited despotisms—he exposed to the open gaze of the world with almost the conscious pride of a patentee who has discovered an useful labour- or life-saving machine.

It was not therefore the novelty of Machiavelli's teaching that arrested the attention and excited the indignation of contemporaries. They were rather repelled by the audacious and cynical frankness with which the Florentine secretary disclosed the principles and manners of Italian potentates. For the first time dogmas and maxims of state policy to which all Italians had long been taught to bow, were revealed in their true repulsive character. Machiavelli was the unconscious Rabelais or Hogarth of his age, describing with an incisive pen but deliberate volition, its manifold corruptions. No doubt the mode in which he accomplished this throws some doubt on his real character. All his critics are unanimous in pointing out the contradictions of which he is the centre. Regarded as a man, not as a politician, he was an admirer of political and religious liberty. This has the twofold attestation of the testimony of his friends and his writings. On the other hand, it is equally clear that he lent himself to schemes of political ambition and tyranny, while his *Prince* is the *vade mecum* of the unscrupulous despot. This contradiction seems to me solved by what I term his moral Skepticism. Machiavelli is a cold, unimpassioned cynical spectator of the game of human existence. A believer in the maxim 'Homo homini lupus,' he is not very solicitous as to what portions of humanity are destined to be the devourers or

what the devoured. If communities, whether secular or ecclesiastical, can extort liberty from their rulers, by all manner of means let them do so. Abstractedly the condition of freedom is highest, and Republics are better forms of government than the irresponsible caprices of tyrants. On the other hand, if the ruler no matter with what unprincipled astuteness or cruelty, can cajole, or coerce his subjects, he must be an imbecile if he does not do so. Thus as Machiavelli's religious deity is Chance or Fortune, so his political god is Power. He is an advocate of 'the good old rule,'

> 'The simple plan,
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can.'

This well-worn maxim comprises in fact the sum and substance of his political philosophy.

iv. Machiavelli is therefore, as I have called him, a moral Skeptic. As such he is closely related to Augustine and Calvin. Starting from a political standpoint, he is also a believer in human depravity. He who legislates for human societies ought, to use his candid and generous rule, 'presupporre tutti gli uomini essere cattivi.' This is, indisputably, the basis of his own system. He is an utter disbeliever in the existence and worth of virtue, self-sacrifice, humility, and of other qualities which impart honour and dignity to humanity. For him man is a compound of weakness, folly and knavery, intended by Nature to be the dupe of the cunning, and the prey of the despotic ruler. The regulative and restoratory power which Calvin finds in supernatural grace, Machiavelli looks no higher for than the unprincipled astuteness and the pitiless tyranny of the political governor. False and demoralizing as is the Calvinistic conception of humanity, that of Machiavelli is much more so. If Calvin's disbelief in all inherent goodness or virtue tended to undermine the foundations of conscious human merit, responsibility and self respect, he gave back a principle which, however exaggerated or one-sided, served, in many cases, as a potent substitute for the impaired motives; and had the advantage of making its proof consist in personal experience. Whereas Machiavelli—and the same remark applies to Hobbes—after undermining all sources of human freedom and independence, delivered man over to political power—a weak, helpless, imbecile slave. The logical outcome of Machiavellianism may therefore be defined as Skeptical Pessimism or Pessimistic Skepticism. A world in which all model rulers were of the vulpo-leonine type, in which men were either fools or knaves, in which physical force and intellectual cunning are the chief cardinal virtues, in which

there is no room for goodness, gentleness, love, patience, humility —the disinterested and benevolent attributes of Christianity—had certainly better never have existed, or having by some mischance come into existence, the sooner it were again reabsorbed into its primal uncreated nothingness, the better for all interests really worth consideration. That this spirit of despair of humanity, this moody contemplation of the universe as a kind of gambler's chance, is deeply impressed upon the literature of the Renaissance, no student of it will choose to deny. But the phenomenon does not appear to me attributable, as the effect of a cause, to the intellectual activity and Free-thought of the period. It is rather social than philosophical; and may be ascribed to the undermining of all ethical and religious principles on the part of the Church. Indirectly, also, it may be regarded as another phase of the disappointment which appeared then to await every department of human quest. Italian society seemed to have despaired of virtue and moral perfection, as its philosophy did of indubitable truth. At the same time we must bear in mind that Machiavellian Skepticism—accompanied by its correlate, an excessive display of the instincts of despotism—is by no means an uncommon feature among eminent politicians. Whether it is that they acquire their knowledge of human nature 'at home,' or that a large experience of the motives, and guiding principles of mankind, has a tendency, in persons whose intellectual perceptions are allowed to over-ride their feelings, to engender a contemptuous estimate of them, regarded as the pawns of the political chess-board, we need not now ask. Could the latter be proved it would show—and Machiavelli is a case in point—that enlarged research into men's motives, ways and actions, induces social Skepticism, just as investigation into their knowledge induces intellectual unbelief. Certainly this is the marked characteristic of men like Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Napoleon the First and Bismarck and other champions of the gospel of success. Whatever the religious or intellectual beliefs of these men, they distrust their own kind. They start on their several missions with the foregone conclusions of human weakness, venality and corruption. They are skeptics of the race. Napoleon once said of politics, 'il n'a pas d'entrailles'; and Professor Settembrini has well remarked,[1] *apropos* of Machiavelli's statecraft the science may be likened to the traditional form of cherubs, 'all head and wings and no body; all brain and energy and no heart.' For my part, I regard the Skepticism that takes away from humanity all goodness and unselfishness, which undermines the mutual confidence

[1] *Lezioni di Letteratura Ital.*, vol. ii. p. 134.

that forms the connecting link of all social existence, as not only the most unsustainable in reason but the most demoralizing in practice. Disbelief in man, as an unit of social life, appears to me a far greater offence than doubt of Deity, and misanthropy, in that sense, a more mischievous principle than Atheism. The reasoning of the Apostle which bases belief in God upon belief in Man, and asserts the divine nature of human affections, seems indeed borne out by the instincts of humanity. This is instructively shown, in the case of Machiavelli, by the general verdict which affirms him to have been an Atheist. As an assertion of direct unbelief this is untrue. Nowhere does he deny, or even question, the existence of Deity; nowhere does he profess to deny the chief verities of the Christian faith. Literally and explicitly he was far from being an Atheist; but virtually and implicitly, his professed and contemptuous indifference for whatever is divine and Godlike in the relations of men to each other, or in the providential government of the world, are equivalent to pronounced Atheism. The world of humanity, which he surveys with cold comprehensive glance, is a den of raging wild beasts. Its actual governor is no more reliable or permanent agent than chance. Its divine order and progress is mere indecisive motion from one Nowhere to another. The universe, in a word, is a moral chaos: infinitely more revolting and painful to contemplate than the greatest physical cataclysm conceivable.

But, while reprobating Machiavelli's conclusions, we must admit that they are not utterly destitute of justification. His political system, notwithstanding its basis of Skepticism and distrust, was not unsuited to the period that gave it birth. Unusual evils demand, or seem to demand, summary and violent remedies; and the condition, political and social, of Italy in the sixteenth century might well have caused anxiety to the thoughtful politician. What means should be adopted, he might have asked, to introduce discipline into social manners, and order and legality into political institutions. Reasoning from phenomena before him, and accepting as a precedent the general course of Italian politics, he could only find the requisite agencies in material force and unscrupulous cunning. All the ills from which his country suffered he considered to be owing to its partition into so many separate states, and to the perpetual divisions and internecine strife thereby engendered. The continual intervention of foreigners, the mischievous interference of the Papacy, helped largely to intensify this unhappy state of things. Machiavelli longed for the advent of some deliverer[1]—a man with indomit-

[1] See the eloquent passage in the last chapter of the *Prince*, which Pro-

able will and iron hand, who might reconstruct and unify the whole country. The means by which he accomplished this purpose were of no importance. He might wade to his throne through seas of blood. He might be guilty of the foulest treachery and corruption. He might exercise the most unlimited and tyrannical sway over the minds and bodies of his subjects. His reign might be pregnant with national demoralization for centuries afterwards.[1] All this mattered little, provided Italy could attain to strength and independence as a great European power. I need hardly add that these aspirations, however defensible on the ground of patriotism, as that virtue was regarded by Machiavelli, were entirely chimerical. Not only were the conditions and elements of Italian politics in the sixteenth century too antagonistic to allow coherence, but the position of Italy and her past history in relation to surrounding nations, rendered the idea, at that time, little better than a grotesque absurdity. Moreover there is no reason to suppose that Machiavelli contemplated an Italian despotism as a political finality. All human societies and organizations were in his opinion in a chronic state of unstable equilibrium. Each had its natural periods of birth and growth, decay and death. And this Herakletean flux and reflux was uninfluenced by moral considerations. 'Virtue,' said he, 'produces repose, repose engenders inactivity, inactivity disorder, and disorder ruin.' Similarly from ruin comes order, and from order virtue, or as he expresses the same sentiment in his *Asino d' oro*—

'Vedi le stelle e 'l ciel, vedi la luna
Vedi gli altri pianeti andare errando
Or alto or basso, senza réquie alcuna.
Quando il ciel vedi tenebroso, e quando
Lucido e chiaro; e così nulla in terra
Vien nello stato suo perseverando.'[2]

Without insisting that this conception of alternating opposites is necessarily skeptical, it is easy to see that it lends itself readily to

fessor Settembrini, calls a 'National Hymn,' in which Machiavelli invokes the Future Deliverer of Italy. It ends with the stirring words of Petrarca—

'Virtù contro al furore
Prenderà l' arme, e fia il combatter corto;
Chè l' antico valore
Negl' Italici cuor non è ancor morto.'

Comp. Settembrini, *Lezioni*, etc., ii. 136; and Moritz Carriere, *Die Philosophische Weltanschauung Reformationszeit*, pp. 232–236.

[1] On this point see some admirable remarks in Settembrini, Op. cit., Vol. ii. pp. 137–139.

[2] *Opere*, Vol. viii. p. 347.

political uncertainty. An observer might well hesitate, for instance, as to whether any particular process he witnessed was a stage in growth or in decay, just as a man on the sea-shore might not be able to say for an instant whether the tide was receding or advancing.

To his political Skepticism must be added decided traces of twofold truth in his personal character. What to the theologian of his time was a conflict between faith and reason was to Machiavelli an antagonism between despotism and liberty. This strife, which he discovered in the political macrocosm, he felt in the microcosm of his own being. Nothing is more striking, in his political works, than the juxtaposition of contrary sentiments. In one sentence, *e.g.* he praises some political strategy or act of opportune cruelty, while in the next he expresses admiration for a deed of heroism or forbearance (the latter of course having proved itself to be successful). He is clearly of opinion that, to quote his own proverb, 'Opposita juxta se posita magis elucescunt.' On which of the two his affections are really concentrated it is difficult to say, the efficacy of tyranny and the charms of liberty so equally share his expressed admiration. Some of his biographers decide the question by making his feeling for despotism, respect; while his sentiment for liberty is the warmer passion of love. But it seems just as probable that there was no real preference of either above the other. They were rival coefficients in human institutions; and the merit of one above the other could only be decided by the circumstances of the case; and be tested only by success. He was assuredly far from partaking Milton's generous confidence in the inherent superiority of truth and freedom, struggling no matter against what odds; and if he had ever adduced the venerable maxim, 'Magna est veritas et prevalebit,' it would have been on the distinct understanding that truth must be backed by a superior material force. One effect of his perpetual oscillation between the extremes of despotism and freedom is to impart to his historical works an appearance of extreme fairness, which all his critics have noticed and commended. We may regard it as a result of Renaissance Free-thought passing into a form of twofold truth. It is a characteristic shared also by Guicciardini.

Harmonizing with this Skepticism, and partially its source, is Machiavelli's confessed delight in watching, both in history and in personal observation, the diversities of thought, character and manners existing among men; especially when of different nationalities, race and religion. This, as we shall find, was the favourite occupation of Montaigne, and the root-thought of his Skepticism. Both observers seem to have drawn from their investigations opinions

derogatory to humanity, though Montaigne's good-humoured ridicule of his fellow-men is at least a pleasanter feature than Machiavelli's moody and misanthropic pessimism.

We thus perceive that Machiavelli's Skepticism is of a peculiar and impure quality. There is nothing to show that he had ever expended any thought on the great problems of existence, or that he deemed their investigation worthy of his intellectual energies. His practical genius was developed to such an extent that there was little room left for ideal exercitations. Of truth the sole conception he had formed was political success, as of Deity his chief notion was Fate or Destiny. What his ethical principles were we have already noticed. There is therefore little that is disinterested and generous in his character as a thinker. The taint of selfishness pervades his thought as it does also, to a certain extent, his acts and life.

It would not be right to close our remarks on Machiavelli, considered as a Skeptic without reference to his satire on the Free-thought of his age, contained in his *Asino d'oro*.[1] This is, in my judgment, the most remarkable of his satirical works. It consists of a reconstruction of the well-known fable, 'the Golden Ass,' and is derived partly from Lucian and Apuleius, and partly from Plutarch.[2] Its most striking feature is the last canto, in which we have the reflections of a really 'learned pig,' who, like the hero of the fable, has once enjoyed the doubtful privilege of human form. This quadruped represents, with much thought and humour, the Epicurean characteristics of the time; and dilates on the many disadvantages pertaining to the manners and customs of that lower animal, man.[3] In some respects it is a satire even upon Machiavelli's own principles; certainly the lines:—

> 'Non dà l' un porco a l' altro porco doglia,
> L' un cervo a l' altro: solamente l' uomo
> L' altr' uomo ammazza, crocifigge e spoglia'—

is a severe condemnation of many of the principles contained in the *Prince*. In its swinish enjoyment of material pleasures and his contempt for higher or more ideal pursuits, Machiavelli's pig bears a considerable resemblance to Pulci's Margutte. He distinctly refuses

[1] *Opere*, vol. viii. pp. 366–373.

[2] Comp. M. Artaud, *Machiavel*, vol. ii. pp. 30–32.

[3] The advantages of the brute creation over humanity, especially in respect of their irrationality, has been a favourite theme for satirists and humorists of all ages. Perhaps the most graceful and poetic treatment it ever received was in the *Idylles des Moutons* of Madame Deshoulières: Amsterdam, 1694. Comp. Bayle's *Dict.*, Art. Ovid, note H; and see, on same subject, Villari's *Machiavelli*, Vol. ii. p. 385, Eng. Trans.

to return to the miseries of human existence; and he sums up the many advantages of a porcine life in the amusing climax:—

'E se alcuno infra gli uomini ti par divo
Felice e lieto, non gli creder molto
Ch'n questo fango più felice vivo
Dove senza pensier mi bagno e volto.'[1]

Machiavelli's intellect was much too restless, and his temperament too energetic to allow of much wallowing in the sty of Epicurus; but the 'senza pensier' of the last line suggests the thought whether the absence of pure intellectual speculation, so conspicuous in his writings, may not be ascribed to intentional self-abnegation; so that, despairing of certainty in such topics, he purposely cultivated indifference and vacuity of thought. At any rate, it is evident that 'senza pensier' had become an ordinary characteristic of the age, and, as such, arrested the attention of the satirist and humorist. We may remember that Pulci's Margutte, with all his tastes and feelings of the very lowest type of animalism, is nevertheless designated

'Il maestro di color che sanno.'

[1] See Villari loc. cit. The persons, or causes, aimed at in Machiavelli's satire have been very variously interpreted. Probably the most unlikely is Busini's reference of it to Guicciardini, and the adherents of the Medici. Villari regards its interpretation as 'hopelessly impossible at the present date.' Under the circumstances the reference of it to the most '*piggish*' of Italian causes then current,—*viz.* Obscuranticism,—may claim some measure of recognition.

CHAPTER III.

GENERAL CAUSES AND LEADERS.

Guicciardini. GUICCIARDINI, the historian *par excellence* of the Renaissance, though different from, and in many respects opposed to, Machiavelli in respect of politics, resembles the great Florentine secretary in his Free-thought proclivities; and his intense hatred of sacerdotalism. He was a man of wonderful perspicacity and breadth of view, of great administrative talents, and of admirably balanced judgment. With Machiavelli he must be classed among the dual-sighted men noticed in our chapter on twofold truth, to whom every subject of human contemplation presents, not a single and uniform, but complex and multiform aspect. When he began his celebrated history, or rather the discourses intended as preparatory exercises for it, he adopted the cautious equilibrating method which must needs characterize every impartial historian. In describing human motives, state policies, and all other matters into which some degree of tortuousness and uncertainty necessarily enter, he posited his subject in the form of Pros and Cons, summed up with lucidity of method, and a more than judicial impartiality. His method in politics and history thus resembled the equipoising of divergent views which distinguished the theology of Thomas Aquinas, Abelard, and Peter Lombard. Nor did he adopt these Pro and Con exercises merely as a kind of youthful gymnastic, as some writers have thought;[1] but because the twofold method formed an integral portion and manifestation of his cautious, far-seeing, comprehensive intellect.[2] To such an extent did he carry this method of investigation into human affairs that, as he himself confesses, when he had decided upon and adopted a given opinion or line of conduct, though with the utmost determination—for in practical matters he was anything but an irresolute man—he experienced afterwards a half-consciousness of repentance as the rejected

[1] Cf. *e.g.* Art. Guicciardini, in *Ersch und Grueber*, vol. xcvi., section i., p. 268 note.

[2] Comp. v. Ranke, *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber*, p. 5.

alternations continued to present themselves to his reflective and ever busy intellect.[1] The application of this, as a general psychological truth to creeds and convictions, we have noticed in a previous chapter.

Guicciardini's autobiography and the interesting collection of maxims or mementos contained in his Inedited works,[3] give us an insight into his personal character and reveal his sympathies with the Renaissance movement. Petrarca does not excel him in his contempt for astrology and similar current superstitions of his time, the pretensions of which he exposes in a clear and forcible manner.[4] Nor is his disdain less for the super-subtle refinements of the schoolmen and Averroes. His attitude to Papal Christianity was a mixed sentiment not uncommon to the freer thinkers of his time. The ordinary Romish ecclesiastic—a compound of ignorance, greed and hypocrisy—he utterly detested. One of his fervent prayers for the future of humanity was, that the world might be delivered from the yoke of sacerdotalism. On the other hand, brought into contact as he had been with the higher classes of the Roman hierarchy, for some members of which he cherished a sincere friendship, he was not inclined to favour openly the Lutheran Reformation, which he himself admits he might have done,[5] had it not been for those personal ties. Indeed his relation to Christianity resembles Machiavelli's in being rather that of a politician and moralist, than of a speculative or religious thinker. Luther's work *e.g.* commends itself to him as a potent instrumentality for the subversion of sacerdotal claims rather than as a dogmatic reconstruction of Christian theology. To the doctrines of the Church, except when they bore directly on practical life, he is indifferent. He expresses his conviction that the supernatural must, under any conceivable circumstances, be involved in darkness; and that theologians and philosophers have only follies to assert concerning it.[6] On the subject of miracles he is as skeptical as Machiavelli, affirming that they belong naturally to all religions, and are therefore but a feeble proof of the superiority or truth of any given religion. He thinks that, in their best attested form, they are only examples of natural phenomena as yet unexplained.[7] He dislikes the excess of dogmatic development which had become the opprobrium of Christianity, and is shrewd enough to

[1] *Opere Inedite*, i. p. 141 (Ricordi, clvi.).

[2] *Evenings with the Skeptics.* Ev. vi.

[3] Especially vol. i. and x. The former containing his *Ricordi*, the latter his autobiography.

[4] *Op. Ined.*, i. pp. 107, 161.

[5] *Op. Ined.*, i. pp. 97, 203.

[6] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 130.

[7] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 129. Comp. Burckhardt, *Cultur der Renaissance*, ii. p. 236.

detect its mischievous effects on the human character. The result of over-religiousness, he says, is 'intellectual effeminacy, leading men astray into a thousand errors, and diverting them from generous and manly enterprises.' In saying this he does not derogate from the Christian faith, but rather confirms it;[1] a statement which shows that Guicciardini also knew how to discriminate between Christianity and ecclesiasticism. The former he believes is summed up in the duties of practical benevolence and forbearance. In a striking epitome of religious duty he says,[2] 'I do not find fault with the feasts, prayers, and other devotional duties which are ordered by the Church, or mentioned by preachers, but the virtue of virtues, in comparison with which all others are trivial, is to injure no man, and to benefit so far as we can every man.' Still more striking, perhaps, is his genuinely Christian tone on the subject of charity and forbearance. In his 'Mementos' he exhorts his readers not to allow themselves to be restrained from beneficence by ingratitude; for in the bestowal of kindness, apart from all considerations of gratitude, there was something divine; and the noblest revenge any man could exact from his enemy was to do him kindness.[3] His large experience of men and human affairs enters, as a counteracting influence, into his conception of religious dogmas. On more than one occasion he expresses his belief in the natural goodness of humanity;[4] and thinks that men leave the straight path only by the pressure of temptation; but this does not prevent his avowal that the judgments and opinions of bodies of men are generally determined by falsehood or accident.[5] He also tries to reconcile the justice of Divine Providence with the course of history. He cannot understand *e.g.* how on the ordinary theory of 'God in history,' the sons of Ludovico Sforza should have inherited Milan, acquired as it was by the villanous conduct of their father. Experience has moreover taught him that the triumphs attributed to faith are well-grounded, but he does not scruple to rationalize its *modus operandi* by making it mean persistency. Like Machiavelli, Guicciardini is a true patriot; but his ideas are more moderate and humane than those of his friend. His own warmest aspirations for Italy and humanity are centred in 'civil and religious liberty.' 'Three things,' he once said, 'I should like to live to see—a well-ordered Republic in

[1] 'Nè voglio per questo derogare alla fede cristiana e al culto divino, anzi confermarlo e augmentarlo discernendo il troppo da quello che basta.' *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 174.

[2] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 142.

[3] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 175.

[4] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 133.

[5] *Op. Ined.*, i. p. 214.

Florence, Italy set free from all foreigners, and the deliverance of the world from sacerdotal tyranny.'

Reflecting in so many points the characteristics of his age, it is not wonderful to find that Guicciardini is also afflicted with the 'Weltschmerz' which is the prevailing intellectual disease of the men of the Renaissance. On the occasion of his attaining his thirtieth year,[1] he thanks God for the many mercies he had bestowed upon him, especially for the possession of so much intellect as to discern the vanity of this life. . . . He expresses a mournful conviction that life and human usages such as were then most customary, were unworthy of a noble-minded, well-nurtured man, and that perseverance in those usages could not, in his own case at least, be unattended by the greatest shame. The whole tone of the meditation assimilates it to those aspirations of which we have examples in Petrarca, Giordano Bruno and others, in which dissatisfaction with the present is blended with a hopeful yearning for a future of freedom and enlightenment. No doubt there was much in the political events and social manners, no less than in the ecclesiastical affairs, of his time to justify that dissatisfaction; and there were also a few symptoms of an amelioration in human thought and life which might have been held to warrant a sanguine view of the future. I have already quoted a passage from his thoughts in which Guicciardini pronounces a favourable estimate of humanity; but this it may be feared is an *ex parte* and sentimental view, prompted perhaps by pleasant social intercourse; certainly it is not borne out by the general tone of his writings. Montaigne, with his usual keen observation, remarked that in his History 'among the many motives and counsels on which he adjudicates, he never attributes any one of them to virtue, religion or conscience, as if all those were quite extinct in the world.'[2] The accusation applies more or less to most of the historians and chroniclers of the Renaissance. We have already marked the excess to which Machiavelli carried his distrust of human nature. But Guicciardini's mind was too well balanced, and his judgment too comprehensive, to allow him to share Machiavelli's moral Skepticism. His History dealt with the period of the greatest political corruption and social depravity in all Italian history; and it was only reasonable that it should take its colouring from the personages and events which it describes; but I cannot help thinking that Montaigne's opinion is somewhat exaggerated, and needs that modification which is so

[1] *Op. Ined.*, x. p. 89.

[2] *Essais*, book ii., ch. 10. Compare Guicciardini, *Op. Ined.*, x., Introduction, p. xxvii. Guicciardini resembles Montaigne in having sought retirement from the follies and vanities of his time.

readily and pleasingly supplied by the collection of his 'Inedited Works.' These must now be held to supply the best available materials for estimating Guicciardini's character, and there can be no question as to the substantial excellence of the self-revealed portrait.[1] In addition to what I have already said on this point, I may observe that the extent of his sympathy with the free-culture of the Renaissance is as great as could have been expected from his somewhat austere and reserved temperament. A firm believer in Christianity, he refused to accept either the superstitious or dogmatic additions by which its primal purity had been corrupted. His belief in the supernatural was too profound and well-grounded to permit an easy acquiescence in interpretations of it suggested by human ignorance or ecclesiastical self-interest. Of his sincere piety there can be as little question as of his probity and integrity. The main element in his character-formation was the indomitable independence which enabled him to survey the events and personages of his time as from a lofty standpoint of self-contained and completely equipped individuality. As a type of moderate and restrained Free-thought, Guicciardini may contrast with men like Luigi Pulci, who represent extreme and libertine aspects of the Renaissance. Indeed it is only by a comparative method, such as we have adopted in these chapters, that the varied phases of any great mental movement can be adequately appreciated. A similarity of influences and environment will no more in the moral than in the physical world engender an identity of product. The characters I have sketched were chosen purposely as representing, so far as possible, all the prominent varieties of Renaissance-culture. No doubt we might have found examples of men more free in their opinions, more unrestrained in their conduct, more inimical to Christianity than Pulci and Machiavelli; and there are instances of prominent thinkers, who, with a bias to Free-thought, are still more moderate in its exercise than Guicciardini; but by taking, as we have, examples of neither extreme we shall be more likely to obtain a fair average of the general thought of the period.

Casting a backward glance over the men whose Free-thought tendencies I have thus attempted to discriminate and describe (for we must reserve to Pomponazzi a philosophical and academical niche for himself) we find the human intellect, in the Renaissance, returning to itself from the wilds of Sacerdotalism and Superstition. There is a Renaissance of the human reason so long crushed beneath the iron heel of Authority—a new birth of Nature after a long winter of

[1] Comp. especially his letter to Machiavelli, *Op. Ined.*, p. 100, perhaps the best document among all his writings for determining his true character, on account of its unconscious self-portraiture.

asceticism and monkish fanaticism. A fresh starting-point for knowledge and science, after ages of obscurantism and darkness—a revival of freedom after intellectual and religious thraldom. A Renaissance of humanity from the tomb of a corrupt theology, and a resurrection of Christianity itself from the grave-clothes and rocky sepulchre in which Romanism had invested and buried it, as the Jews of old did its Founder. The men whom I have selected as types of the movement, notwithstanding strongly-marked individual characteristics, clearly discerned the general signs of the times. The origin and scope of the Free-thought common to them all may have differed in every particular case; with some it was the method, with others the sole object of enfranchisement; but there was no conflict of opinion as to the propriety of employing it. For excessive dogma the clear remedy was Skepticism and Negation, independent search and inquiry. Whatever else was uncertain, there was no hesitation on this point. Nor was there any doubt as to the propriety of opposing Reason to Authority, and human interests to sacerdotal pretensions. Nor again was there any question as to the desirability of a return to nature. The main lines, in short, of the Renaissance movement were accepted by all. Its energies and aspirations constituted points of union between men of varying idiosyncrasies, professions and sympathies; and secured their co-operation in the holy cause of freedom and culture.

We must now turn to the single Philosophical Skeptic in our List

Pomponazzi.

Here we enter upon a new vista of Italian thought, that which pertains not to courts, literary and ecclesiastical circles, and to ordinary citizens, but to universities and lecture rooms. From his earliest manhood to his death Pomponazzi was a Professor of Philosophy. He therefore represents a different standpoint from any of the thinkers we have already considered. His Skepticism is not the accidental product of a particular period; for had he lived at any other time than the fifteenth century he must have been a free and independent thinker—a ruthless dissector of conventional beliefs. His doubt was engendered not by wayward or transient ebullitions of freedom, nor by mere dissatisfaction with excessive dogma — the tendency was inherent in his nature.

As we are thus passing over from the region of popular and literary to that of philosophical skepticism, this will be a fitting place to glance at the general causes which contributed, during the latter portion of the Renaissance, to create and sustain, in Italian Universities, the reasoned unbelief of which Pomponazzi is the most worthy but by no means the sole representative.

Skepticism in Greece was entirely ratiocinative; in the Italian Renaissance it was generally intuitional and spontaneous. Most of the influences we have noticed were instinctive rebounds against intellectual tyranny, rather than deliberate self-contained investigations into the problems of existence. I do not mean to say that those instincts might not, after their primary manifestation, have sought to justify themselves by reason; or that, in certain cases, they might not have been secretly prompted by reason; all I contend for is, that the preparatory reasoning process is mostly suppressed, or occupies a subordinate place in the final result. At the same time Italian Skepticism is an indigenous product. The Free-thought of the Goliards, the Fabliaux, Provençal poetry, etc. in Italy and elsewhere manifests itself as a fresh spontaneous outcome of popular conviction and sentiment. Examples of Skepticism and Rationalism occur far back in the middle ages, as we have already noticed, though rather in isolated flashes than continuous rays. But we cannot place earlier than the fifteenth century the classical impulse, as a generally co-operating agency in the production of free speculation. During that century we find in Italy a considerable number of men who organized themselves as followers of Epikouros and other thinkers of antiquity, in opposition to the belief of the Church, and the restraints of social life. But their authorities and sources of inspiration were chiefly traditional. No work of any avowed Greek Skeptic was known to Italy until the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, certainly not until the later period if the knowledge be understood to apply to the Greek language. The classical authors who introduced philosophical doubt into Italy were, in literary circles, Cicero and Seneca; and in academic circles, Aristotle's works. The skeptical effect of Cicero's eclecticism I have mentioned; and something of the same power would attach to Aristotle as well, especially as he was yet but an un-texted 'umbra nominis' and a nucleus of conflicting comments. Among ecclesiastical authors, portions of Augustine's works must also be enumerated as having, on minds of a certain class, a dogma-disturbing effect. Writing in the fourteenth century, Plethon's exponents of doubt and certainty are respectively Pyrrhon and Protagoras; for he curiously accepts the well known maxim of the latter writer—'Man is the measure of all things,' as an affirmation of human infallibility.[1] The first complete contact of the Italian mind with the Sokratic elenchus dates from the rise of the Platonists in Florence. The Platonism that existed previously—perhaps taking

[1] Comp. Fritz Schulze, *Geschichte der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Erster Band, p. 142.

its tone from the theological abstractions and dogmatic passivity of the Church—represented merely the idealism of Plato, and took no account of the severe questioning and skeptical suspense of his master. The first employment of the Sokratic elenchus as a 'Pars destruens' of Philosophy was by Picus Mirandola, who used it against Peripateticism. Our survey of Pomponazzi will show that besides other applications in the direction of Skepticism, Aristotelianism continued to develop that peculiar anti-dogmatic relation to the Church which resulted from its acceptance by the Schoolmen as a system of secular truth equal in validity to the sacred verities promulgated by Christianity.

The age of Machiavelli and Pomponazzi introduces us also to the new life of the Italian Universities—the academic portion of the Renaissance. Speaking generally, this consisted in the virtual displacement of theology by philosophy and science. During the latter half of the fifteenth and the whole of the sixteenth centuries all the influential chairs in these seats of learning were filled not by theologians but by philosophers. Ecclesiastical dogma, so far as it arrogated to itself an independence of all reasoning and discussion, was left in the enjoyment of her inviolable supremacy accompanied by the supercilious disregard of the newer thinkers. What was asserted as the dogmatic creed of the Church was refused a hearing before the courts of Reason and Logic, unless it chose to divest itself of infallibility and other supernatural immunities, and make its plea on the grounds and by the methods of demonstrable truth. This was the position of the doctrine of Immortality, the discussion of which forms such a salient feature in the life of Pomponazzi. Removed by the Skepticism of the age from its exclusive ground of ecclesiastical dogma, it was accepted by the Universities as a moot point of philosophy, to be determined by an appeal to Aristotle or some equally irrefragable authority in physical science. If this treatment of it as an open question was not adopted, the only remaining alternative for the Italian thinker was the theory of Two-fold Truth, and this was accepted without hesitation by all the foremost teachers in Italy during the sixteenth century. However immoral the consequences of that doctrine in special cases, it undoubtedly provided a free scope for reason and secular science, on which those influences had now grown powerful enough to insist. On this point the divergent and often hostile schools of Aristotelians and Platonists were quite at one. The materialists of the former, and the idealists among the latter were equally firm in their determination to reason upon their accepted principles without suffering undue interference from ecclesiastical dogma. As they were careful to point out, they were philosophers, not theologians.

Their concern was, exclusively, secular culture. Human reason and logic were their sole recognized instruments, the wisdom of the ancients, their only authority. They were no doubt alive to the possibility of their conclusions traversing some dogma or ecclesiastical decree, possibly standing in opposition to a fundamental maxim of Christian Revelation. But this consideration was regarded by them as sentimental and subordinate. The antagonism between Faith and Reason, if their mental advance arrived at such a point, was deemed not to be of their own seeking; at most it was but an incidental outcome of their truth search. The autonomy of the reason and entire freedom of thought in all secular subjects, must at any cost be preserved. Besides, the faculty of reason, the pursuit of truth, were not these also to be regarded as Divine? Were popes and councils the sole channels of truth, secular as well as sacred? Had traditional Christianity a monopoly of all conceivable truth and goodness? In the corrupt state of the Church such questions were redolent of the bitterest sarcasm. Hence the Philosophers took their own course. They commented on Aristotle and Plato as pure disciples of the Academy and Lyceum, and as if their lot had been cast in Greece 400 B.C. instead of in Italy in the sixteenth century A.D. Cremonini, in the latter part of that century, announced publicly from his chair at Padua, that he followed the teachings of Aristotle and the *dicta* of philosophers, though he was quite aware that they conflicted occasionally with the dogmas of the Church. Pomponazzi, Bruno and Vanini are three different illustrations of the same truth which will come within the scope of our present enquiry. As an illustration of this subordination of theology to philosophy in Italy, I have already pointed out the striking fact, that all the great Italian theologians of the time, Bonaventura, Anselm, Peter Lombard and Aquinas acquired their celebrity in foreign countries and seats of learning, not in their native land.[1]

What was thus true of the philosophers was in a lesser degree true also of the poets and literati. In their own manner these also cherished a form of dual truth. Just as the thinkers refused to permit the encroachment of dogmas in their intellectual proceedings, so did the poets refuse to allow their imaginations to be thwarted and circumscribed by similar agencies. Dante, Petrarca, Pulci, Ariosto and Tasso even, when they touch upon subjects connected with the teaching of the Church yet preserve the freedom and autonomy of their own creations. Pulci, as we have seen, goes a step further, and employs his imagination to burlesque the teachings of the Church. The

[1] Comp. Berti, *Giord. Bruno*, p. 257; Bartoli, *I Primi due Secoli*, p. 201.

others, while maintaining an attitude of external reverence to ecclesiastical dogma, evinced in varying degrees a tendency to regulate their poetic flights more by their own spiritual instincts, their sense of fitness and love of liberty, than by the restrictions of ecclesiastical dogma. Tasso and Ariosto, as above remarked, are inclined to find compensation in their poetic visions and ideal representations of human life for the evil which attached to the ecclesiastical and social life of Italy. Unconsciously they pitted their poetic reveries, their sublime conceptions of truth and humanity, against the sordid and polluted conceptions forced on their countrymen by the Papal church.

Our sketch of Pomponazzi will also remind us of another circumstance which made Italy the centre of European Free-thought in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I mean the supremacy of Rome, and the peculiar effect of that position in an age of intellectual ferment and active speculation, in concentrating varying lines of thought upon herself as the infallible centre of orthodox belief. No doubt it had long been the result of the dominion arrogated by the chief seat of Western Christendom, that alleged unorthodox and heretical notions of every kind should be finally tested at Rome; but in an age of intellectual stagnation this fact had no very stirring effect on the minds of the Italians. Now, however, after the quickening process of the Renaissance, it assumed quite another aspect. Rome, unconsciously to itself, became the focus of European speculation. Just as the intellectual activities of Greece converged on Athens, so did the wayward impulses, the eccentric ideas, the rationalizing opinions of Christendom find a meeting-point at the seat of the Papacy. The Papal Regesta furnish us with numberless examples of the activity of the Roman Curia, in this particular, previous to the rise of the Inquisition. Pomponazzi's books, we shall find, were sent to the pope for condemnation. One effect of this centralization of various opinions, in an age of great mental excitation, was to create something like an exchange of forbidden ideas. Indeed, the heterodox opinions of some Sicilian or German bishop stood a far better chance of intellectual discussion at Rome among *e.g.* the cardinals of Leo X. than in the districts in which they were originated; and in the fifteenth century neither Roman ecclesiastics nor citizens were to be readily intimidated by the threat of Papal thunder. The consequence was that Rome during the Renaissance was a "colluvies hæreticorum"—the centre of religious and philosophical speculation, whether conformable to ecclesiastical dogma or not.

Pomponazzi. So much by way of preface, though necessarily brief, as to the intellectual and religious environment in which Pomponazzi was born A.D. 1462, in the town of Mantua. His family is said to have been noble and conspicuous, but nothing further seems known respecting it. Of his early years we are similarly in complete ignorance. The first definite information we have of him is that he was a student of medicine and philosophy in the University of Padua. His most esteemed teachers, he tells us, were Antonius and Trapolino, men of some celebrity in those days, but whose names are now nearly forgotten. In the year 1487 Pomponazzi took his degrees in philosophy and medicine, and the year following, when he was only twenty-six years of age, we find him established as extraordinary Professor in the University—a sufficient testimony to the precocity of his intellect. It was a custom, we are told, at Padua in those days, to elect two professors representing different points of view of the same subject; so that by their public disputations the minds of the students should be stimulated to independence of thought, eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and readiness to detect error. The existence of such a custom affords an interesting proof of the freedom of teaching and discussion; which, notwithstanding ecclesiastical repression, was not uncommon in the Italian Universities; a feature probably not altogether unconnected with the municipal rights and popular privileges pertaining to the Free Towns which for the most part gave them birth. The ordinary Professor of Philosophy, to whom the youthful Pomponazzi was appointed coadjutor, was a veteran teacher and Peripatetic thinker called Achillini; and their dialectic tournaments appear to have excited no small interest in the University. Let us try and conjure up one of those scenes, not only interesting in themselves as representations of mediæval science and manners, but throwing considerable light on the position and character of Pomponazzi and the reform he endeavoured to effect.

We may imagine ourselves then in Padua on a summer's day of the year 1488—time about 8 a.m. The narrow streets of the old town are crowded with citizens and students, who not only fill the arcades, but to a considerable extent the middle of the roadways. Among the students are to be seen men of various ages, from the beardless youth of sixteen to the man of thirty-five or forty years. Hardly less varied are their nationalities. Here a group of Englishmen, conspicuous by costume, language and physiognomy, is followed by another of Frenchmen, with their national dress and characteristics. Spaniards and Germans, Hungarians and Bohemians, not to mention natives of smaller European States, are discernible among the

crowd.[1] Occasionally an university professor passes in broad-sleeved gown and long train. All seem hastening in the same direction. We accost a fellow-countryman, who is hurrying past with a book under his arm. We ask him where he is going, and what is the meaning of the unusual excitement in the streets. He looks with surprise at us, and answers that he is going to the 'Palazzo della Ragione'—the Palace of Justice or Reason, to see the combat. On our further enquiry, What combat? he regards us with still more astonishment, and asks in return if we are not aware that in the aforesaid Great Hall of Reason there is about to commence a discussion between the renowned Professor Achillini and young Pomponazzi, on the profound and interesting question of the simplicity or multiplicity of the Intellect? Telling him, in reply, that we are strangers, newly arrived from England, and are quite ignorant of what is passing in Padua and her famous university, we ask him to show us the way to the scene of the literary tournament. He immediately consents, and bidding us follow him, he leads the way for a short distance until we arrive at the open market-place and the 'Palazzo della Ragione.' We enter with the crowd into the great hall, the enormous proportions of which still astonish the visitor to Padua; and, thanks to our guide, we are enabled to find a fairly good place not far from the seats which are reserved for the authorities of the town and university, and the two low desks placed in readiness for the combatants. The hall, notwithstanding its size, is quite crowded with students and citizens; and for a time the hubbub is almost deafening, arising mainly from the vehement and voluble discussions of eager partizans as to the comparative superiority of the two professors, intermingled occasionally with somewhat free expressions of opinion on current political events. Never before have we witnessed such a scene, never could we have imagined that among such a crowd an interest so passionate could have been evoked by questions so speculative and metaphysical. We audibly express our wonder at the sight, as well as our doubt whether in any of the great European seats of learning such a scene had ever been witnessed. To our wondering enquiry, a companion, who said he had recently come to Padua from the University of Paris, replied that from what he could hear of the merits and arguments of

[1] It can hardly be necessary to adduce Shakspeare's well-known reference in the 'Taming of the Shrew' to—

'Fair Padua, nursery of arts,'

as a proof of its celebrity in England during the sixteenth century, and of the fact of its being a favourite resort of Englishmen. For some information on this subject, see Bartholmess' *Giordano Bruno*, p. 369, note ix.

the rival philosophers they were Italian representatives of Abelard and William of Champeaux, and if he dared prognosticate the issue of the contest, it was like to terminate, as that well-known philosophical duel terminated in Paris, in favour of the younger and bolder thinker. 'You are right,' answered an Italian: 'our "little Peter"[1] is a second Abelard. I have been told that he resembles him in expression, size, and figure, as well as in name, and the freedom with which he handles philosophical questions. As to his victory over Achillini, that is a mere question of time. Peterkin's lectures are crowded already, and Achillini's audiences are beginning to dwindle.' A bystander who had been listening to our discussion, hereupon angrily interferes with the remark, that this is not the case: Achillini's hearers are as numerous as ever, and are not likely to be lessened by such an insignificant upstart as little Peter of Mantua. Further argument is prevented by the entry of the rival champions, accompanied by the Rector and a few of the officials of the university. This is the signal for an outburst of vociferous applause which seems to shake the walls of the old hall; partizans on either side clamorously shout the name of their particular favourite, saluting them by such cognomina as their affections, or the expected issue of the approaching contest, might suggest. Achillini thus becomes, with an obvious reference to the struggle between the Homeric hero and Hector—Achilles; while the disciples of Pomponazzi continue to greet him with the more familiar soubriquet of 'Peretto' or Peterkin. We now turn our attention to the two heroes of the fray, who are taking their assigned positions in the centre of the hall. The contrast between them is remarkable. Achillini is a striking-looking man of about thirty years of age. He is rather tall and stout in proportion, though a student's stoop of the shoulders detracts somewhat from his height. He possesses an intellectual countenance, which in repose seems placid and reflective, with large dreamy-looking eyes. He walks up to his desk with a careless slouching gait. His professor's gown, we notice, is torn in several places, and is further remarkable by its narrow sleeves and general scanty proportions. Instead of forming a train behind him it scarcely reaches below his knees. Evidently a man regardless of personal appearance. His adversary, on the other hand, is almost a dwarf, with a powerful-looking face, a broad forehead, a hooked nose which imparts a somewhat Jewish cast to his features, small piercing black eyes, which, as he turns here and there, give him a peculiar expression of

[1] Pomponazzi was called by his disciples and friends 'Peretto,' the diminution of Peter, from his dwarfish stature.

restless vivacity. His thin lips are almost continually curled into a satirical smile. He has scarce any hair on his face, so that there is nothing to hide its sudden and perpetual change of expression. 'A born enquirer and skeptic!' is our mental ejaculation as he takes his place at his desk.[1]

The preparations for the combat are characteristic of the men. Achillini has on the desk before him a row of ponderous folios, which an assistant, a favourite disciple, is marshalling in due order; Pomponazzi has nothing but a few papers, containing apparently references and notes.

At last the moment arrives. An usher proclaims silence; the Rector of the University announces the subject to be debated; and the wordy battle begins. Achillini, with a loud and rather coarse voice, but with great deliberation of manner, lays down in a short speech the proposition he intends to defend. 'The intellect is simple, uniform, indecomposable. This is clearly,' he affirms 'the opinion of Aristotle, as testified by Averroes, his greatest commentator; and he is willing to defend this position against all comers.' When Achillini thus ends his brief preparatory address, his partizans applaud for several seconds. But a still greater storm of cheering arises when Pomponazzi stands forward at his desk and throws his restless eagle glance over the noisy crowd. So short is his stature that he can hardly be discerned. Some of Achillini's partizans jocosely request him 'to stand upon his desk,' others offer to take him on their shoulders. His own adherents scornfully retort that a dwarf has frequently proved more than

[1] These personal characteristics of the rival professors are drawn from contemporary sources. On Achillini, see Tiraboschi, *Storia*, etc., Tom. vi., part ii., p. 712; and Niceron, *Memoirs*, etc. xxxvi. pp. 1–5. Renan (*Averroes*, p. 362) seems to regard him as a mere debater, though he evidently was much more. His dialectical prowess was once acknowledged by the flattering alternative which has frequently been applied, perhaps more appropriately, to professors of the noble art of fisticuffs, 'Aut Diabolus, aut magnus Achillinus.' On Pomponazzi, cf. Tiraboschi, op. cit., Tom. vii., part ii., p. 614; Ginguené, *Histoire Literaire d'Italie*, vii. pp. 434, 435. But the main source for Pomponazzi's personal appearance and mode of argumentation, etc., is the testimony of his disciple Paulus Jovius, *Elog. Doct. Vir.*, xxxvi. Comp. Fiorentino, pp. 12, 13. Most writers who have dwelt upon these contests seem to imply a strong contrast, in point of age, between Pomponazzi and his adversary; but this is clearly wrong. The men were nearly of the same age. The main distinction consisted in the fact that Achillini was an experienced debater, who had hitherto held undisputed sway in Padua; whereas Pomponazzi was, comparatively, a new comer, who had his spurs yet to win in the field of philosophy. Hence the remark of M. Franck, 'Pomponace avait l'ardeur, la confiance, le prestige de la jeunesse, tandis qu'Achillini touchait à son déclin,' is quite unfounded. Comp. *Moralistes et Philosophes*, par A. Franck, p. 91.

a match for a giant, and augur for their 'Little Peter' a victory as certain as that of David the Jewish shepherd boy over his ponderous antagonist. When these amenities have ceased, Pomponazzi begins to speak; and in a tone of voice, full, clear and round, which makes itself heard in every part of the hall,[1] he takes exception to Achillini's argument. The intellect he maintains is not simple but multiple; and this he will prove is Aristotle's real opinion, who must be interpreted not by the misty and incomprehensible comments of Averroes—a man of alien race and mental sympathies—but by the lucid testimony of his great fellow-countryman, Alexander of Aphrodisias. That this is Aristotle's view he will also show from Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, etc., etc. There is, again, vociferous applause when 'Little Peter' ceases; and it is easy to perceive that his adherents outnumber considerably those of his antagonist.

We need not try to follow the debate, which is carried on with the pedantic formality of method, subtlety of logical and linguistic terminology, and licence of attendant circumstances, which mark such philosophical tournaments of the Renaissance. Both combatants profess to be guided by Aristotle; but as there is no Greek text which each equally acknowledges (and if there were, neither would have been able to read it), the advantages of possessing a common authority are merely nominal. Achillini is evidently a man of immense erudition and dialectical power, and his tactics are directed either to overwhelm his adversary with some formidable and crushing dictum, or to ensnare him in the meshes of an involved and insidious argument.[2] In either case his attempts are utterly foiled by the caution and vigilance of his foe. Pomponazzi is too wary to allow himself to be impaled on the horns of a dilemma, or caught in a well-baited half-concealed dialectical trap. He is also prompt to turn the tables on his powerful, though somewhat unwieldy, antagonist. In quickly uttered sentences, he takes exception to a few words, or some short proposition, in the long-drawn argument which Achillini has just announced; and with

[1] Paulus Jovius speaks with especial commendation of Pomponazzi's oratorical powers.

[2] Achillini's erudition, and dialectical power, seems sufficiently attested by his collected writings. These are entitled *Alexandri Achillini Bononiensis Philosophi celeberrimi Opera Omnia in unum collecta.* Venetiis MDXLV. It is perhaps needless to add that the volume is excessively rare. Some few years since the author was fortunate enough to find Achillini's folio, which a former possessor, mindful of one of the most famous of mediæval controversies, had bound up with the collected edition of Pomponazzi's works. *Tractatus*, etc., Venetiis MDXXV. The book forms one of the rarest treasures of his library. Achillini's treatment of the question here discussed, between himself and Pomponazzi, may be found in Book iii. Doubt iv. of his *Quodlibeta*, fol. 14.

flashing eyes and a sarcastic smile he burlesques them by a witty parallel statement, points out their inherent absurdity, and thus raises a laugh at the expense of his foe. Or, more at length, and in serious measured tones,[1] he analyses Achillini's propositions, points out some glaring inconsistency between their different parts, or between the conclusion sought to be deduced and the dicta of standard authorities. It must be admitted our skeptic is not very scrupulous in his choice of argument, provided he can amuse the audience.[2] Each of his witty sallies or comic arguments is hailed with boisterous laughter and applause, which even Achillini's partizans are compelled to join. Clearly the audience have scant sympathy for long and involved dialectical processes, and warmly approve short and pithy ratiocination, based upon mother wit and common sense.

The contest is obviously unequal: it reminds one of that between a whale and a sword fish, or readers of Scott's novels might find an apt illustration in the encounters between the ponderous Dominie Sampson and the 'facetious' but rather agile Pleydell. It is to no purpose that Achillini complains of the impertinence of Pomponazzi's replies, or protests that his witticisms and sarcasms are no real answer to a serious philosophical argument. Pomponazzi has won the ears of his audience, and may so far be said to have achieved victory.

We need dwell no further upon this attempted representation of scenes in which our skeptic was involved during his residence at Padua. To my mind, these literary duels of the fifteenth century are significant of the increasing divergence between ancient and modern thought.[3] Achillini typifies Scholasticism: with its methods and ratiocination—formal, ponderous, elaborate and unelastic. Pomponazzi represents modern thought: keen, eager, restless, vivacious, caring little for traditional processes and authorities merely as such, and much for the clear, simple dictates of unfettered human reason. The fact that such a scene was possible, that popular and academic sympathies were already enlisted on the side of philosophical neologianism, is a clear indication of the transition of thought which was taking place in Italy; and which claims Pomponazzi as one of the

[1] See reference above to Ginguené, *Histoire*, etc., vii. p. 435.

[2] Comp. Prof. Fiorentino, in his paper, 'Di alcuni manoscritti Aretini del Pomponazzi,' in *Giornale Napolitano*, Agosto, 1878, p. 116.

[3] Comp. the description of Giordano Bruno's disputes with the Peripatetics of Paris nearly a century later, in Signor Berti's *Giord. Bruno*, p. 198. These dialectical tournaments seem to have lost in France and elsewhere much of the free, popular, and informal character which distinguished them in their native home—the Italian Universities.

earliest and most potent of the instruments which combined to effect it.

The prophecy with which I have credited one of my characters in the preceding scene is founded on fact. Pomponazzi did succeed in drawing off most of the hearers of Achillini; and so far made good his supposed resemblance to Abelard, and the success of that thinker in opposing William of Champeaux. With the fame thus early acquired his future as a teacher of philosophy was assured. Nevertheless the date of his enrolment among the ordinary professors of the University is uncertain. His latest biographer, Fiorentino, who has displayed great industry in bringing together the few scattered facts of which any records are left concerning him, tells us that the first intimation of such a promotion is in a document bearing date October, 1495, in which Pomponazzi is styled 'Ordinary Professor of Natural Philosophy.'[1] Four years later he achieved a still higher position, for by the interest of Cardinal Bembo he obtained the first chair in the University. He continued his professorial labours, commenting on the works of Aristotle, until 1509. In that year, owing to the disasters which followed upon the League of Cambray and the policy of Pope Julius II., the University of Padua was closed, and its professors and students were dispersed throughout Italy. Pomponazzi, attended by a number of attached disciples, found a temporary refuge in Ferrara; where he still continued his lectures and his studies. From Ferrara he moved, about the year 1512, to the University of Bologna, which was destined to become the seat of his greatest literary activity, as well as his abode during the remainder of his life. When Pomponazzi took possession of his professorship, Bologna was recovering from the social disturbances to which she had long been made a prey by the misgovernment of her rulers. The last of these was driven forth by Pope Julius II. in 1506, and the town was incorporated with 'the States of the Church.' Bologna benefited by the change in her position. Her municipal and academic privileges were preserved. The pope placed both town and university under the government of forty magistrates; and under this *régime* she enjoyed a large measure of freedom and independence.[2] To the magistracy of Bologna, and their sympathy for intellectual liberty and progress, Pomponazzi was

[1] *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 15.

[2] Comp. Sismondi, *Republiques Italiennes*, x. p. 89. 'Il (Julius II.) fit en grande pompe son entrée à Bologne: il conserva à la ville ses priviléges et son administration républicaine, mais en changeant sa constitution,' etc. . . . Then after describing how the new senate of forty was composed, Sismondi proceeds, 'l'oligarchie des quarante de Bologne a administré cette province avec plusieurs prérogatives qui rappeloient sa liberté et son ancienne indépendance.'

indebted for much kindness and support during the most critical period of his life.

In the year 1516 Pomponazzi published his famous treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, the foundation both of his character as a skeptic, and his fame as a philosopher. In this work, says Fiorentino. 'he ceases to be a Greek commentator, and reveals himself as an original thinker; he lays the foundation of the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance.'[1] The immediate occasion of writing this work is differently told. Fiorentino *e.g.* tells a story of Pomponazzi's illness, during which he held discourses with his disciples concerning the future world. One of his pupils requests his master to resolve some doubts, which his own teaching had suggested, respecting the conflicting opinions of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on the Immortality of the Soul. The request is said to have prompted the research which resulted in the treatise. No doubt such requests were frequently made to the free-thinking professor; and so far the story is not intrinsically improbable. But I should be inclined to attribute the work to more general causes. The intellectual tendencies of the time, together with Pomponazzi's own labours, and mental proclivities, are quite enough to account for its production.

We have already[2] had occasion to notice the position of Aristotle during the middle ages, and his utility in furnishing to minds too large or too restless to be confined by ecclesiastical dogma, a *point d'appui* for speculation outside its boundaries. In the fifteenth century it became necessary to review this position. The rivalry of Peripatetics and Platonists, which distinguished and stimulated the Italian Renaissance, the research into Nature which characterized it, together with the discovery and printing of the original texts of Aristotle's writings, combined to turn men's attention to those venerated depositories of Greek wisdom. Other critics and thinkers began, as Pomponazzi did, their career of free-enquiry by 'Dubitazioni sopra Aristotle.' In those days such a title was hardly less than an open declaration of intellectual rebellion. Aristotle no longer held the position he had occupied during the twelfth century.[3] He was no longer outside the pale of Christianity. Tacitly, and unofficially, the Stagirite had been received into the Church. His works had been authoritatively reconciled with its dogmas. To effect this was the

[1] Fiorentino, *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 30.

[2] See *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii. p. 229, on Semi-Skepticism of the Schoolmen.

[3] M. Jourdain places the full introduction of Aristotelian Philosophy into Scholasticism between A.D. 1200, and the death of Thomas Aquinas in 1272. See his *Recherches*, etc., 2nd ed., p. 210.

main object of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, the most gigantic intellects among the schoolmen. There was less difficulty in effecting this, as few of the works of Aristotle were then known, and these only in the form of Latin translations made from Arabic versions. 'Doubts about Aristotle' therefore not only implied, 'Doubts about Aquinas and other Aristotelian ecclesiastics' whose opinions were considered indubitable, but were closely akin to 'Doubts about Christian dogmas.' That his Aristotelian researches had this result in the case of a bold and keen-sighted thinker like Pomponazzi, can at least occasion no surprise.

But besides Pomponazzi's own tendencies, another general cause of his research in this direction may be found in the contemporary stir among Italian thinkers on this very subject. The Renaissance was in a great degree a secularizing process; it was a protest against the systematic vilification of all temporal interests, feelings, and occupations which characterized mediæval thought and religion. The reason of this depreciation of all mundane interests and duties, on the part of the Church, was according to these freer spirits not far to find. It was by no means the unselfish wish to bring light and immortality to light through the gospel, nor the desire to secure for all men a share in the Divine bounty. Other motives and aspirations had long actuated Papal ecclesiasticism. Rome had discovered that the future-world, with its deterrent and stimulating influences, was the most valuable appanage pertaining to the Church. It was the El Dorado whence it was enabled to draw the greater portion of its enormous revenues. Immortality, the reward or rather the necessary outcome of virtue and goodness according to Christianity, had become a marketable commodity, to be sold on the one hand and bought on the other, on as favourable terms as buyer or seller could obtain. The rewards of the unseen world were treated just as an European government, in our own day, sells farms and settlements in a distant colony. This excessive and interested 'other-worldliness' required, men thought, to have its foundations closely examined. Hence arose numberless enquiries as to the nature of the soul, its relation to the physical organization, what reasonable grounds existed for predicating its immortality, etc. For some time this formed the main topic of lectures in all the Italian universities. We are told that whenever a new professor at any of these seats of learning prepared to address his hearers for the first time, no matter what the subject was which he had appointed for the purpose, he was met by the clamorous demand, 'Tell us about the soul.'[1] A

[1] C. Bartholmess, in *Dict. de Science Philosophiques*, Art. 'Pomponace.' Renan says, 'Les discussions sur l'immortalité de l'âme etaient à l'ordre du jour à la

very small discussion on such a topic enabled his audience to test his opinions, the manner in which they had been formed, and the degree in which they were influenced by purely ecclesiastical considerations. On minds so excited the treatise of Pomponazzi operated like a spark on a prepared train. Itself the expression of profound and powerful feelings, it gave them an additional momentum and extension, as well as provided them with a standpoint from which the whole matter might be discussed *de novo*.

Turn we now to the treatise. A single glance enables us to perceive that, whatever the novelty and freedom of its conclusions, it is, in form, rigidly scholastic. It has its full quota of the ponderous argumentation, puerile distinctions and subtle refinements, which characterize generally the productions of the schoolmen. Some writers are offended at this mediæval formalism. Knowing that Pomponazzi is a man of modern intellect and sympathies, and that his conclusions, mainly, are novel, they seem to have expected that his method and style would also have been those of a modern philosophical exposition. But such persons forget that at first new ideas are generally best presented, so far as possible, under the form and dress of the old; and the methods of scholasticism, imperfect and antiquated as we should now consider them, yet contained enough valid reasoning and candid treatment to justify, at all events for the time, their adoption. Even the early Protestant Reformers found it expedient to put their new wine into the old bottles of the schoolmen, until the prejudice of those who had been so long accustomed to such drinking vessels should have ceased, and new bottles better suited for the purpose could be devised.

cour de Leon X.' *Averroes*, p. 363. So Gabriel Naudé, 'L'Italie est pleine de libertins et d'Athees et de gens qui ne croyent rien; et neanmoins le nombre de ceux qui ont écrit de l'immortalité de l'âme est presque infini.'—*Naudæana*, p. 46. Compare also Vanini, 'Alii vero etsi ob metum Hispanicæ et Italicæ Inquisitionis ore confiteantur (*i.e.* animi immortalitatem) operibus tamen ipsis abnegare non erubescunt. Plerosque enim, quo sunt doctiores, litteratioresque, eo magis Epicuræam insectari vitam vidimus, quod nullius sane religionis argumentum est.'—*Amphitheatrum*, etc. p. 152. It is clear that these discussions on immortality did not tend to confirm it in the popular creed. The Italian speculation of the fifteenth century is marked by a strong disbelief in the existence of a world beyond the grave, and this decadence of the doctrine of immortality is accompanied by two other phenomena, the one moral the other artistic. The first is the stress on fame and glory as affording the chief impulse to all heroic actions and noble lives; the second is the enormous and elaborate tombs and monuments devised by the great to perpetuate their memories—men thus proving in their very denial of immortality the irrepressible power of the instinct to which it is primarily due. See on the latter point, Jacob Burckhardt's *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien*, p. 265.

You would not thank me, I am sure, for introducing you into the thorny labyrinth of dialectics of which Pomponazzi's treatise mainly consists, nor is it necessary: for by noticing a few of its salient points you will have no difficulty in apprehending the merits of the argument, and of the conclusions of its author.[1] The treatise is partly critical and partly didactic. The critical portion discusses the opinions that have been held as to the nature of the soul by Plato, Aristotle, Averroes, and Thomas Aquinas. These and other authorities are so placed in juxtaposition that their contradictory expositions seem to refute each other. But Pomponazzi does not disguise his preference for Aristotle, and Aquinas, and their mode of discussing the question from a natural history point of view; nor does he conceal his aversion to the Pantheistic leanings of Plato and Averroes. The authority to which he chiefly defers is Aristotle's well-known treatise *De Anima.* In this work are examined the functions of the soul, and the question is mooted how far these functions are connected with and dependent on the physical organization, and how far they are independent of it. Though Aristotle does not decide the question very distinctly,[2] he betrays a marked inclination towards a necessary connexion between the bodily organism and the faculties, intellectual as well as animal, which pertain to it. Pomponazzi may be said to build his own doctrine upon the lines furnished to him by this work of Aristotle, yet with no small independence of thought and method of his own. He maintains, for instance, in direct opposition to the teaching of his master, and not in complete conformity with his own, the creation of human souls.

Coming to his own doctrine: Man, according to Pomponazzi, stands upon the confines of both the material and spiritual worlds, and thus partakes of the nature of each. For there exist in the universe three modes of being, viz. 1. The separate or abstract intelligence, which has no need of organisms or matter of any kind. 2. The souls of brutes, which have need of matter. 3. Human souls, which partly have need of matter and partly have not—needing it as an object, but not as a subject.[3] These three grades are reproduced in every

[1] Cf. Prof. L. Ferri, *La Psicologia di Pietro Pomponazzi.* The chapter of his commentary headed, 'Utrum anima sit immortalis secundum Aristotelem' (p. 206, etc.), is a brief summary of the argument of the larger treatise.

[2] See Aristotle, *De Anima,* iii. ch. 5; Cf. Brande's *Aristotle,* ii. p. 1197.

[3] 'Hoc stante dicimus quod in genere cognoscentium duo reperiuntur extrema et unum medium, horum autem extremorum unum est intelligentia, quæ in intelligendo et cognoscendo neque indiget corpore ut subjecto, neque ut objecto, veluti notum est; alterum vero extremum est anima bestialis cui proprium est indigere corpore ut subjecto et ut objecto. Medius autem est homo qui rationalis existit. Quare de his duabus proprietatibus medio modo

individual man in the form: 1. Of the speculative intellect, by which he creates science, and is like God. 2. The active intellect, by means of which he is concerned with material things, and creates the arts. 3. The practical intellect, by which a man fulfils his merely animal part in the world.

You will perceive then that the human soul, being partly Divine and partly animal, partly dependent on a material organism and partly not, is thereby asserted to be partly mortal and partly immortal; or, to put Pomponazzi's distinction in the scholastic phraseology which he employs, the soul is absolutely mortal (*simpliciter mortalis*), and relatively immortal (*immortalis secundum quid*). This very delicate distinction may thus be, somewhat crudely, rendered:—Naturally and inherently the human soul is mortal, but accidentally, or by peculiarity of function, or circumstances, it may be immortal. This argument of course involves the inseparability of the intellective soul from the organization, which Pomponazzi, after Aristotle and the schoolmen, defines as its form. He gives reasons for this indiscerptibility, which Professor Ferri thus summarises,[1] and which will serve to show you the kind of proof which was regarded as conclusive on the subject not only by Pomponazzi, but by all the scholastically trained minds of his age. The dependance of the intellect (or intellective soul) upon matter is necessary, according to Pomponazzi, for four principal reasons.

1. Because matter, undetermined, and regarded as a potentiality, is the genetic principle of all forms.

2. Because matter defined and determined as an organic body, is the *sine qua non* of the existence of the soul, as its true form.

3. Because there is no plurality of substantial forms in man, but an unity of form and nature.

4. Because the necessity of considering the universal in the particular, the idea in the imagined picture, the intelligible in the sensible, proves that the functions of the intellect, *in themselves spiritual*, cannot be exercised without the organization.

Though somewhat obscured by dialectical intricacy, it is obvious that the argument amounts to a denial of Immortality as maintained by the Christian Church. This conclusion was drawn by his contemporaries immediately after the publication of the treatise. Nor was it denied by Pomponazzi himself; who confessed that as a Christian he believed, as a philosopher he did not believe it; according to

debet participare; verum nullum potest inter illas extremas proprietates assignari medium, nisi *non indigere ut subjecto et indigere ut objecto.* Quare hoc erit proprium animi humani.'—*Apol.*, Ed. Venice, 1524, fol. 53.

[1] *La Psicologia*, etc., pp. 69, 70.

the maxim of 'twofold truth' we have already discussed.[1] No doubt, this paradoxical credo may sometimes be credited with sincerity, though of a perverse kind; but in the case of Pomponazzi the religious belief seems adopted merely to divert attention from the extent and preponderance of philosophical skepticism. For not only does his reasoning on other subjects, when Aristotle comes into collision with ecclesiastical dogma, betray a skeptical tendency, but on this very point of the future existence of the soul he reasons as if he thought he had established, not its immortality, but its mortality. While, therefore, he professes to oscillate between philosophy and theology, his subsequent proceedings indicate a conviction that he has not only crossed the Rubicon of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, but has burnt his boats. What I mean is, that having denied immortality on grounds of psychology, he proceeds to argue that the belief is not needed as an appeal and support to practical ethics; at least in the case of cultured and thoughtful persons. Pomponazzi is indeed the first Christian writer who maintains, on grounds of reason and philosophy, the principle of disinterested and unconditional morality; and though of itself the principle does not necessarily involve a doubt of future existence, yet in his case, with the corroboration afforded by his usual attitude to difficult or mysterious dogmas, its ulterior significance, in a negative direction, cannot be disregarded. Nothing can be clearer, and in my judgment more convincingly urged, than his expositions of this subject. From the standpoint of Christian stoicism of the loftiest kind, he maintains that 'the essential reward of virtue is virtue itself, that which makes a man happy; the punishment of the vicious is vice, than which nothing can be more wretched and unhappy.'[2] This award is involved in what we should now call the moral order of the universe, but was then known as 'the essence of things.' Other awards are accidental, and therefore inferior. 'For when a reward is conferred by accident, essential good seems to be diminished, nor does it remain in its perfection. Suppose *e.g.* one man acts virtuously without hope of reward, another on the contrary, with such a hope, the act of the second is not held so virtuous as that of the first; wherefore he is more essentially rewarded whose reward does not accrue to him by accident.' From this 'ethical, sublime' point of view, the question of the future existence or non-existence of the soul becomes of comparatively small importance. To use his own words, 'whether the soul be mortal or immortal, death

[1] See *Evenings with the Skepties*, vol. ii. p. 13.

[2] 'Præmium essentiale virtutis est ipsamet virtus, quæ hominem felicem facit. . . . Pœna namque vitiosi est ipsum vitium, quo nihil miserius nihil infelicius esse potest.'—*De Immortal.*, chap. xiv.

must be despised; and by no means must virtue be departed from, no matter what happens after death.' Whatever be our opinion of Pomponazzi, and some of his teachings, it is impossible to withhold our approval from sentiments so wholesome and nobly unselfish. We shall find similar views in the case of more than one of our remaining skeptics; and had better postpone the consideration of their practical bearings until we come to discuss Peter Charron. Probably the conclusions of Pomponazzi, as well as undoubtedly those of Charron, as to absolute morality, were determined not only by speculative considerations regarding a future life, but also by the practical need which the debased Christianity of their time suggested. They had to face the portentous fact that the future rewards and punishments of the Christian Church had become utterly ineffectual as preservatives of, or stimulants to, morality among its chief ministers, as well as in the very citadel of Christendom itself.[1] We can hardly wonder that Pomponazzi concludes, from the increasing torpor of the Christian faith, that its end was approaching.[2] This might be called a fair inference from the moral conditions of the problem, and was destined to find a sort of fulfilment in the Protestant Reformation. But the prognostication, which was a favourite speculation of the age, was originally based upon astrological signs and portents;[3] for Pomponazzi, like Cardan, and our own Roger Bacon, was a firm

[1] 'Neque universaliter viri impuri ponunt mortalitatem, neque universaliter temperati immortalitatem: *nam manifeste videmus multos pravos homines credere, verùm ex* passionibus seduci; multos etiam viros sanctos et justos scimus mortalitatem animarum possuisse.'—*De Immortal.*, p. 119.

[2] 'Quare et nunc in fide nostra omnia frigescunt, miracula desinunt nisi conficta et simulata, nunc propinquus videtur esse finis.'—*De Incant.*, 12, p. 286.

[3] Few mediæval speculations are more curious than this 'Horoscope of Religions.' It was first propounded by the Arab astronomer, Albumazar, who made the origin of all religions and prophets depend upon certain planetary conjunctions. Christianity, *e.g.* depended on the conjunction of Jupiter with Mercury. It was held that the conjunction of Jupiter with the Moon would be the signal for the complete abolition of all religious beliefs. Albumazar carried his art to such perfection that by the horoscope of each religion he was able to determine the proper colour of its vestments. Had he exercised his calling in our own days, it is conceivable that English ritualists might have recourse to him instead of to the 'Ornaments Rubric.' Cf. Renan, *Averroes*, pp. 326–7; Bacon, *Opus Maj.*, pp. 160–170; Emile Charles's *Roger Bacon*, pp. 47–48. It may be added that the recorded visit of Chaldæan astrologers to the cradle of the Infant Jesus appeared to give an authoritative sanction to the application of astrology to Christianity. As the star in the east announced the birth of the new religion, so a similar cometary appearance or conjunction of planets would portend, thought the mediæval astrologers, its final extinction. Comp. chapter on Vanini *below*.

believer in the influence of the stars upon existing religions and their destinies. Moreover, he found another argument for an approaching convulsion and regenerating movement in Christianity, in Aristotle's belief that philosophy must from time to time be renewed and make a fresh start.

But we must, I think, admit that Pomponazzi's view of religion, its sanctions and its objects, was of a partial and imperfect nature. Religion was to him a synonym for legislation: indeed he frequently adopts the class-name which Averroes had assigned to religions, viz. Laws (Leges). He was apparently aware that his lofty Stoicism, however much it might commend itself to the philosopher and thinker, was ill adapted for more general use. This he expressed by comparing the ignorant and unthinking to apes, who will only carry their burdens by dint either of coaxing or beating.[1] From this point of view he considered the rewards and punishments of a future life as useful to the legislator, to encourage or coerce those who were not amenable to more disinterested arguments. Indeed he accounts for the wide-spread prevalence of those beliefs, in other religions besides Christianity, by the hypothesis that legislators had chosen them for purely political purposes; and lays down the principle that the ruler may adopt any religion or religious dogma, irrespective of its truth, if it seems fitted to serve his purpose as an instrument of morality or social order.[2] Nor does he limit this permission to cases where a religious truth, as, *e.g.*, immortality, is incapable of demonstration; but he thinks it a praiseworthy act on the part of a ruler to invent parables, myths and fables in order to allure his subjects to orderly and right conduct. In his dealings with humanity, the philosophic legislator must have regard to the nature and constitution of man. This is so materialized and brutish, in most cases, that the only treatment available is that which nurses and doctors employ towards children and the sick. It cannot be denied that Pomponazzi's opinion of man, both as an intellectual and moral being, is contemptuous and cynical to an extreme degree; and places him in close juxta-position with Machiavelli. Pomponazzi's intellect, like that of the Florentine Secretary, was of the cold, unimpassioned, legal kind, which ignores all the more deeply seated feelings and impulses of our nature, and is inherently incapable of estimating the purely religious or emotional side of human character, whether moral or intellectual. As an in-

[1] *De Immort.*, chap. 14; *De Fato*, lib. iii. chap. 16.

[2] 'Respiciens legislator pronitatem viarum ad malum, intendens communi bono, sanxit animam esse immortalem, non curans de veritate, sed tantum de probitate, ut inducat homines ad virtutem, neque accusandus est politicus.' —*De Immort.*, chap. xiv.

stance of this incapacity on the part of Pomponazzi, I may observe that he classes religious faith with imagination, which, though founded on illusion, is nevertheless productive of wonderful effects. The strength of either faculty he holds to be in direct proportion to the ignorance and want of cultivation of its possessor! He however makes a concession to the moral nature of man which he denies to his intellect. Though no man can attain truth, a man may, though very rarely, attain ethical perfection; the percentage of good men to the rest of mankind he estimates to be about one in a thousand. It is on this side that our human obligation lies. No man is obliged to be learned or an artist, but every man is compelled morally to acquire, or at least to strive for, so much ethical excellence as his reason suggests to him.

It is quite in harmony with Pomponazzi's contempt for the vulgar, and his rule to treat them as children, as well as being a sort of practical corollary from his doctrine of Twofold Truth, that he asserts a philosophical 'Disciplina Arcani'—advocating the necessity of esoteric teaching incommunicable to the many. 'These things,' he says, speaking of some of his advanced speculations, 'are not to be communicated to common people because they are incapable of receiving these secrets (*arcanorum*). We must beware even of holding discourse concerning them with ignorant priests.' For this reason he divides men into philosophers and religious, in harmony with his classification of divergent truths, the latter of whom are opposed to the former as fools are to the wise, 'since philosophers alone are the gods of the earth, and differ so much from all other men, of whatever rank and condition, as genuine men differ from those painted on canvas.'

The self-same argument on which Pomponazzi founded his doubt of immortality, is the basis of his belief in the powerlessness of the reason to attain or comprehend truth. 'The human intellect,' he says, 'cannot comprehend abstract things,[1] being as it is of a dual nature, and placed between brutish and abstract intelligences; it can only perceive by means of the senses, and for that reason cannot apprehend itself. Hence it is unable to obtain a knowledge of the universal as it exists in itself and simply; and can only do so by means of the particular;[2] or, as he elsewhere puts it, in every

[1] 'Anima intellectiva est naturæ ancipitis inter bruta et abstracta, non intelligit nisi cum adminiculo sensuum juxta illud:—"necesse est quemcunque intelligentem phantasmata speculari."'—Ferri, *Psicologia*, pp. 21, 98.

'Non est credendum quod intellectus possit ea (abstracta) recipere, quia intellectus est debilis, ita ut non possit tantum lumen sustinere, ideo non movetur ab ipsis: et propter hoc poetæ fingunt quod Juppiter quando accedebat ad aliquam mulierem, deponebat suam divinitatem!'—Op. cit., p. 89.

[2] Fiorentino, *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 171. 'Unde (Intellectus) sic indigens cor-

abstract cognition there must be some material *idôlon*, or individual, by which alone we are able to form it. You will notice that this denial of abstract knowledge, and the assertion of its evolution from particular objects of sensation, assimilates Pomponazzi to the Nominalists, and to Abelard. The intellect is thus bound up in its existence and in its action with matter, and with senses which are material; and intellectual perception of any kind, apart from and independent of material conditions and surroundings, is inconceivable. He rejects even the theory that our conditions of knowledge in a future life may possibly differ from what they are now; for whereas we are now dependent on material aids, it is conceivable that hereafter we may not need them; and so doing he appears to me guilty of unphilosophical arbitrariness, as well of undermining his own classification of beings. For if abstract intellect cannot be conceived apart from matter, what becomes of the Divine intelligence, as well as that of man himself, of whose soul it forms a portion? Nothing is in reality left but pure materialism.[1]

That a work whose conclusion, stripped of all disguise, was the essential corporeity of the human 'intellective soul,' should have excited a vehement controversy was of course to be expected. We are told that both one and the other of the only two possible ways of interpreting 'immortality' which Pomponazzi could have adopted, had already been forbidden by the Church.[2] But the clerical instinct was quite shrewd enough to apprehend danger from Pomponazzi's free-spoken utterances, without any suggestion from authority. The clamour began in Venice, where the clergy were stirred up by a Minorite friar. The Doge was invoked with success, for he ordered the book to be burnt. But burning a book was but an insignificant triumph for those who would gladly have burnt the author. Accordingly the Pope was appealed to; but, by the kindly offices of Cardinal Bembo, the appeal was frustrated. Ranke indeed quotes an authority to show that Leo X. did subsequently order Pomponazzi to retract; but if so, the command was never enforced.[3]

pore ut objecto, neque simpliciter universale cognoscere potest, sed semper universale in singulari speculatur, ut unusquisque in seipso experiri potest.'—*De Immort.*, chap. ix.

[1] Fiorentino (*Pomponazzi*, p. 178) thus states his own conclusions from Pomponazzi's premisses, 'Da quelle premesse però conseguitava necessariamente *la mortalità dell' anima umana*, non potendo ella sopravvivere alla corruzione del corpo, nel quale si fondamentava tutto il suo pensiero.' Comp. on this point Bartholmess in *Dict. de Sci. Phil.*

[2] Bartholmess, loc. cit.

[3] On the part which the Pope took in this matter, and which is referred to above (see p. 12), some light seems to be thrown by the dedication of Niphus's

As the stake was not forthcoming, recourse was had to the printing press. A controversialist of some note, Augustine Niphus, was desired by Bishop Fiandino, once a friend of Pomponazzi, but soon to become the most implacable of his enemies, to write an answer to the treatise on Immortality. Meanwhile Pomponazzi again took up his pen to indite an Apology.[1] In this work, published in 1518, he declaims in bitter and sarcastic terms on the ignorance, vice and hypocrisy of the clergy. His enemies were not a whit behind him in plainness of speech; and what they could not effect by the more refined instrumentality of wit and sarcasm, they tried to accomplish by vulgar vituperation and low abuse. What was the effect we might ask of these attacks, which were continued with slight interruption to the close of his life, on Pomponazzi's standpoint? . . . Did he, for that or any other reason, modify it in subsequent writings. His two most recent critics, Professors Fiorentino and Ferri, differ upon this point. The former supposes that Pomponazzi's account of the nature of the intellective-soul laid down in the *De Immortalitate*, is distinctly developed in a materialistic direction in his *Apologia*, and in another work bearing the title of *De Nutritione*.[2] Professor Ferri denies this, and supports his denial with an elaborate and, to my mind, conclusive argument.[3]

book, in which the author says, expressly, 'hunc libellum ad te scripsi, et sub amplitudine Tui Sanctissimi nominis publicandum esse curavi.' The author may be permitted to say that he has this rare work of Niphus, together with the most important of his other writings, in his library.

[1] This work, *Apologie Libri tres*, together with the two following, *Contradictoris tractatus doctissimus*, and *Defensorium autoris*, are the most valuable of all his writings for forming an estimate of his character. They are part of the collection entitled, *Tractatus Acutissimi utillimi*, etc. Venetiis, 1525.

[2] Cf. Fiorentino, *Pietro Pomponazzi*, pp. 172–175. The development is thus succinctly described by the learned author in his paper on 'Luigi Ferri,' in the *Giornale Napolitano*, April, 1877, p. 274:—'parla prima della *concomitanza* dell' intelletto; poi della *probabilità* che si sviluppi dalla materia; infine della *necessità* che se ne sviluppi,' he adds, 'E quando parla di semplice concomitanza, propende a distinguere la *natura* dell' anima intellettiva dalle altri animi inferiori, dalla sensitiva, e dalla vegetativa.'

[3] See his *Psicologia*, etc., p. 64. The controversy on this subject has recently been continued in Italian Philosophical Reviews, though with a degree of warmth out of all proportion to the intrinsic importance of the point at issue. In the *Giornale Napolitano* for April, 1877 (pp. 269–303), Prof. Fiorentino reiterates his original statement, supporting it by additional arguments. He points out that Pomponazzi (see preceding note) distinguished between the nature and functions of the intellective-soul, and says that it is in respect of the latter (not the former) that there is a perceptible development in Pomponazzi's views. Professor Ferri rejoins in *La Filosofia di Scuole Italiana*, for June, 1877 (vol. xv. p. 395), denying that Pomponazzi makes such a distinction between the nature and functions of the intellective-soul. He fully adopted, says Professor Ferri, the scholastic maxim, 'operari sequitur

The only interest the question—one of extreme intricacy—has for us is to show that whatever doubt may exist as to the stationary or progressive attitude of Pomponazzi on the subject of immortality, it certainly was not retrogressive. His was not one of those pliant characters which are ready to yield to controversial clamour. It is true he had powerful patrons in Cardinals Bembo and Gonzaga, and in the authorities of his own university; but his supreme law and source of confidence came from within—the strong conviction that whatever betide, he must follow the dictates of reason and conscience. Reason was, in fact, the only approach to infallibility which he acknowledged. Reason, or intellect, was superior to any human authority, even to that of Aristotle—greatest of philosophers as he proclaimed him.[1] On this point he took his stand in his defensive works, the spirit of which, and for that matter of Pomponazzi's whole life and teaching, may be exemplified by an extract quoted by Fiorentino from his reply to Niphus. Having said that our will should give way to faith, but that, the will is one thing, the intellect another, he continues: 'But other things are not in our power because, given the premisses, if the consequence follows it is not in our power to dissent from the conclusion. We may do without reasoning altogether; but we cannot grant the antecedent and deny the consequent. Heaven forbid that an honest man, and still more a Christian, should have one thing in his heart and another on his lips. Hence in the performance of my duty as interpreter of Aristotle, as I am convinced his language should be understood, and not in a contrary manner, ought I to lie by, interpreting everything differently from my real sentiment? But if it be said—the hearers are scandalized at it. Be it so, they are not obliged to listen to me, or to forbid my teaching. I neither wish to lie, nor to be wanting to my true conviction.'[2]

The indomitable firmness expressed in these and similar terms received a welcome support from the Bolognese authorities. The most ancient of the Italian universities remained true to her sympathy

esse.' 'The functions depend on the nature'—(p. 401). It seems clear, to an impartial student of Pomponazzi, that in the case of so subtle a thinker, a controversy depending on refinements so minute may easily become interminable; and must in any case be inconclusive.

[1] 'Magna est Aristotelis auctoritas, magnus est etiam rationis impetus.' Cf. Ferri, p. 62. In another place he says 'Magna est auctoritas Alexandri, major Aristotelis, maxima vero est veritatis.' On one occasion, when his university were celebrating with great festivities the election of Charles V., Pomponazzi declared from his professorial chair, 'Mallem esse Aristotelis quam Imperator nunc beatus de quo fiunt letitiæ.' Comp. Fiorentin in *Gior. Nap.*, Agosto, 1878, pp. 121–124.

[2] Fiorentino, *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 54. Comp. *Defensorium*, chap. xxix.

for freedom, and to her claim of being 'the mother of' Italian 'Research.'[1] Pomponazzi had proposed to accept a professorship at Pisa, but the Bolognese refused to hear of his removal. He was then the most celebrated of all the Italian professors. His fame drew crowds of foreign students to their city. The Bolognese magistrates were not disposed to relinquish so much glory, and probably advantage as well, for the sake of a little clerical excitement. Hence, instead of dismissing him, they confirmed him in his professorship for a period of eight years, and increased his salary to 1,600 ducats. The sister universities were jealous of their possession of 'Little Peter,' and would fain have attracted him each to herself. It is indeed an instructive example both of the freedom then enjoyed in the Italian universities, and of their anti-clerical sympathies, that while the clergy were most vehement in their outcry against Pomponazzi, no less than three universities were contending among themselves which should possess him. Pomponazzi, however, would not forsake her who had truly approved herself a 'mother of studies' to the poor persecuted philosopher; and he continued to occupy his professor's chair at Bologna, and to gather round him the most intellectual and free-thinking of the youth of Italy during the brief remainder of his life.

Although the treatise *De Immortalitate*, and the works he wrote to defend it, represent the most conspicuous part of his career as a philosophical teacher and writer, he published a few other works of a novel and startling nature, which deserve a passing notice at our hands.

In 1520 he published a noteworthy treatise, with the title *Concerning Incantations, or the Causes of marvellous effects in Nature.*[2] The occasion of this work was a number of enquiries put to him by a doctor of Mantua, respecting the cause of certain wonderful cures which he had apparently effected by charms and incantations. Acting upon the suggestion thus brought before him, Pomponazzi enters upon a long dissertation of natural wonders. He takes the power of demons for example. As a consistent Peripatetic he could not allow the operation of such intermediate agencies in the production of natural effects. 'It would be ridiculous and absurd,' says he, 'to despise what is visible and natural in order to have recourse to an invisible cause, the reality of which is not guaranteed to us by any solid probability.' On the other hand he dared not deny that such

[1] As the mother-university of Italy, Bologna inscribed the legends on some of her ancient coins, 'Bononia docet,' and 'Bononia mater studiorum.' Cf. Muratori, *Antiq. Ital.*, ii. p. 664.

[2] This is perhaps the best known of Pomponazzi's works, next, of course, to the *De Immortalitate.* It forms the second in the Basle Edition of his collected works.

mysterious powers both good and bad occupied a large space in the teaching of the Church; he therefore again takes refuge in his old argument of 'double truth.' As a Peripatetic he refuses to believe in the existence of angels or spirits, as a Christian and a believer in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Church, he is compelled to admit the existence of such beings.[1] Such is the conclusion of his argument; but in concluding it he evinces a degree of clearness and boldness, irony and sarcasm, disdain for the superstitions of his time and anticipation of greater enlightenment in the future which is truly remarkable. Not that he openly and directly runs counter to the dogmas of the Church, but by adducing collateral considerations of a scientific and natural kind he seeks to diminish their exclusively miraculous import. As a Christian *e.g.* he must not refuse to admit the existence of such supernatural agencies as demons; nevertheless he enquires, how far they are capable of producing those effects which are attributed to them. He finds that being pure spirits they can only operate on matter by material means. He therefore imagines, of course ironically, that spirits who perform bodily cures on man must go about with bottles of medicine, varieties of plasters and unguents, like so many ghostly apothecaries.

Absolute freedom from the superstitious ideas of his time we of course have no right to expect. We cannot therefore be surprised if Pomponazzi transfers to plants, trees, stones, etc., the occult properties and magical powers which many of his contemporaries ascribed to demons. As authorities for this belief, he refers to Pliny, Galen and others; and though his opinions on this subject are quite as strange and superstitious as those of Cornelius Agrippa, we may remember that all progress is relative, and that the step from demons and such supernatural agencies to plants, animals and stones, represents a decided and appreciable advance in knowledge and scientific attainments. Miracles our skeptic treats in a somewhat similar manner. Both as an Aristotelian and as an independent investigator he is fully satisfied that all effects in nature are produced by constant and invariable laws. Miracles therefore cannot be opposed to nature. That is not their true definition. Miracles are the rare events of nature, and their extra-natural character is an inference from that

[1] The Church is also to decide between genuine and false miracles. 'Quod vero aliqua talia sint miracula, aliqua vero ejusdem species non sint, sufficit ecclesiæ catholicæ auctoritas que Spiritu Sancto et verbo Dei regulatur' (*De Incant.*, c. vi.), on which M. Franck comments 'L'ironie est manifeste et il faut avoir la candeur de l'age d'or pour ecrire avec Ritter aux professions de foi chretiennes de Pomponace' (op. cit. p. 121). But this estimate of M. Franck seems just as exaggerated on the one side as Ritter's on the other. See infra.

rarity.[1] Here as elsewhere he will not openly contradict the dogma he is discussing, he will rather reconcile it to science by modifying its definition. At the same time he regards true miracles, *i.e.* rare natural phenomena occurring periodically, of such importance that he anticipates the end of Christianity from the fact of their having quite ceased in the Church. As for simulated miracles, the marvellous effects for example ascribed to sacred relics, he criticises them from the point of view of a skeptical physician. He holds that whatever efficacy is truly ascribed to them is due to the subjective feeling of faith on the part of those who are benefited; and that if they were the bones of dogs instead of holy men they would produce the same results.[2]

As might be expected he treats the miracles of the Bible with more respect. He is persuaded that many of those recorded in the Law of Moses and the Law (*i.e.* Religion) of Christ were really natural events, contemplated and described by ignorant and superstitious people. But he admits this cannot be affirmed of all. Among those which resist the solvent agency of his rationalizing analysis, he especially names the resurrection of Lazarus, the healing of the man blind from his birth, the feeding of so many thousands with five loaves and two fishes, the healing of the lame man by Peter and John, etc., of which he says they cannot be reduced to natural causation, nor were they performed by any created agency.[3] All these cases therefore afforded scope for his bi-partite faith. As a Christian he received them; as a natural philosopher, pledged to a belief in the irreversible laws of the universe, they transcended both his knowledge and belief. They remained in his intellect, with other truths of the same kind, like an insoluble precipitate, resisting the action of all the chemical substances his knowledge enabled him to apply to their solution.

In the same year in which he published his work on Incantations he finished another long treatise—his last important contribution to Philosophy—consisting of five books, and treating of such profound

[1] Miracles, he says, 'pro tanto dicuntur miracula, quia insueta et rarissime facta, et non secundum communem naturæ cursum, sed in longissimis periodis.' *De Incant.*, pp. 294–5. One of the most illustrious of Pomponazzi's countrymen in modern times, Gioberti, seems to have adopted a similar definition and explanation of miracles. Cf. Professor Ferri, *Essai sur L'Histoire de la Philosophie en Italie au* 19*ème siecle*, ii. 188.

[2] 'Medici ac philosophi hoc sciunt, quantum operentur fides et imaginatio sanandi et non sanandi. Unde si essent ossa canis, et tanta et talis de eis haberetur imaginatio, non minus subsequeretur sanitas.'—*De Incant.*, chap. xii., Opera. Ed. Basle, p. 232.

[3] *De Incant.*, cap. vi., op. cit., pp. 87, 88.

questions as Fate, Providence, Free-will, etc. His object in writing this work is instructive, as it gives us an insight into the zeal and earnestness of his intellectual character. He tells us that he undertook those expositions as so many studies of the different questions he discusses in them, to satisfy himself as well as to instruct others.[1] In this treatise, as in others of his writings, he asserts with considerable force, but also with true philosophical discrimination, the doctrine of Human Liberty. He makes it the absolute source and condition of all morality. Predestination, which he defined as the relation of Providence to the individual, as Fate describes his relation to the universe, he therefore so interprets as to leave to man his full liberty of action; and consequently his sense of moral responsibility. He traces this freedom of action also, on its Divine side, in the largeness of the operations of Nature, making what assumes to us the appearance of evil to be the inevitable consequence of its infinite scope and variety of action. He endeavours to reconcile Human Free-will with Divine Omniscience, but has in the last resort to allow their incompatibility. He admits that Aristotle denies special providence, and as a philosopher his sympathies are with his master; but as a Christian he opposes Aristotle, because general providence must needs consist of particular instances. In short, Pomponazzi's position with regard to all those questions which are partly concerned with theology and partly with the phenomena of nature and humanity, is precisely that which we might have expected. He approaches the question from the side of Natural Philosophy and Reason; as an Aristotelian and Professor of Medicine, rather than as a Theologian. He discusses and decides it, if no dogmatic considerations intervene, entirely from that point of view. When however, as mostly happened, almost every step in the argument has some relation to the doctrines of the Church, then he proceeds more warily. If, by slightly modifying its usual definition, the dogma concerned may be wholly or partially reconciled with the dictates of reason and nature, Pomponazzi adopts that course. If, on the other hand, they are so divergent and irreconcileable that the affirmation of the one constitutes the denial of the other, then Pomponazzi has recourse to 'double truth.'[2] But this alternative he only adopts after every conceivable

[1] 'Neque enim tam grande opus aggredi, illud meum fuit consilium, scilicet, ut apud Bibliopolas libri nomen meum celebrantes haberenter: sed adversus ignorantiam meam murmurantis conscientiæ scriptum ad hoc me compulit.' —*De Fato*, etc., I., Proemium. Op. cit., p. 33a.

[2] The following quotations will serve to explain more fully Pomponazzi's position as a maintainer of twofold truth. He approves *e.g.* of the distinction of Albertus Magnus, who said that he reasoned on philosophical questions as

method of reconciling the foes has been exhausted; and in order to avert what is to him the most immoral and unjustifiable of all human actions, *i.e.* the flat contradiction of his philosophical conscience. Hence the numerous antinomies and dualisms, which make up so much of his intellectual creed, may be said to represent so many points where the current of his tendencies and convictions is divided by some dogmatic obstruction. There are intellects which attack such an obstacle with determination, and being unable to move it from their path, they lash themselves, like sea-waves against a rock, into a foam of anger and desperation. Other minds, like deeper currents, meeting the obstruction, divide themselves, and if possible flow round it. We already know that such a dichotomy, though incompatible with intellectual uniformity, is not incompatible with religious sincerity. We must, I think, conclude that Pomponazzi was thoroughly sincere. In fact there is too much earnestness and determination in his character to allow of any other hypothesis.[1] Like Pascal, he grappled with the problems of the universe with a zeal, I might say with a deadly passion, which is almost appalling to witness. Speaking of his earnest attempts to reconcile Divine omniscience with human liberty and with the remediable evils of the world, he says, 'These are the things which oppress and embarrass me, which take away my sleep and almost my senses; so that I am a true illustration of the fable of Prometheus, whom, for trying to steal secretly the fire of heaven, Jupiter bound to a Scythian rock, and his heart became food for a vulture, which gnawed continually

a philosopher, and on theological questions as a theologian, and declined 'miscere credita cum phisicis.' The dogmas of the Church he regarded as extraneous necessities, beliefs imposed *ab extra*, while his own convictions were self wrought out. The two provinces of thought might be compared to the differently motived obedience which a man might render to law in the sense of human ordinance, and in that of equity and inherent justice; so Pomponazzi says, 'Tantum credite in Philosophia, quantum rationes dictant vobis, in Theologia credite tantum quantum vobis dictant Theologi.' He acknowledges that his principle of believing contradictions is opposed by Aristotle, but comforts himself by reflecting that one of them is only verbal, 'Dicit Aristoteles quod nullus corde potest concedere duo contradictoria, quia opiniones contradictoriæ sunt contrariæ in intellectu, sed verbo possumus concedere, corde autem minime.' See Fiorentino in *Giornale Napolitano*, Agosto, 1878, p. 120.

[1] On this point most of his critics are fully agreed. Ritter thinks that Pomponazzi's object, in all his writings, was the reconciliation of science with the teachings of the Church; but this was evidently quite a secondary matter in his estimation. Comp. Ferri, *Psicologia*, etc. Equally unsustainable is Ritter's proposition that Pomponazzi's theory of immortality is not incompatible with the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Comp. *Fiorentino*, p. 189.

upon it.' And in the same chapter he considers the symbol in its general application. 'Prometheus is the (true) philosopher, who because he will know the secrets of God, is devoured by perpetual cares and cogitations. He is incapacitated from thirst, hunger, sleep, or from satisfying the most ordinary needs of human life; he is derided by all, is regarded as a fool and a heretic; he is persecuted by inquisitors; he becomes a laughing-stock to the multitude. These forsooth are the gains of philosophers. This is their wages.' That these plaintive utterances describe the trials and difficulties of his own position is acknowledged by all his critics, and scarcely admits of doubt. It is impossible to say how far his premature death may have been hastened by the opposition he encountered from his ecclesiastical adversaries, or by the unwearied application with which he set himself to solve the inscrutable problems of the universe.[1] Probably both causes contributed to the fatal result. If so, his fate may be represented under another classical image besides that of Prometheus. He is a philosophical Laocoon, who perishes in a vain struggle with the twin serpent-powers—the Inscrutability of the Universe, and the Dogmatism of the Church.

More than one of Pomponazzi's critics have contended that he was quite uninfluenced by the Renaissance, considered as a movement of culture. They point to the defects of his Latin style, to his complete ignorance of Greek, to his evident want of acquaintance with or regard for the *Belles Lettres*. But, in estimating the weight of this criticism, we must consider two things. (1) Pomponazzi's intellectual character; (2) the full meaning of the complex movement which we designate the Renaissance.

1. First and before all things, Pomponazzi was a thinker—a rationalistic philosopher. Language was to him merely the vehicle of his thought, the instrument of his ratiocination. As long as it served these needful purposes, he did not trouble himself about graces of style or ornate composition. Yet his Latin, though rude and unpolished, is not destitute of a certain vigour of its own. His cumbrous argumentation, and the involved construction of his sentences, must be ascribed in a great measure to his scholastic training; partly also perhaps to a fulness and many-sidedness of thought transcending his powers of expression. Still his meaning is generally attained with sufficient distinctness; and his harsh constructions are sometimes agreeably diversified by neat and epigrammatic turns of expression.

2. Pomponazzi's connexion with the Renaissance can only be

[1] Fiorentino, *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 68.

denied by limiting its scope, and ignoring some of its most essential characteristics. The resurrection of classical literature, and its effect upon the artistic temperaments and sympathies of Italians, was only one phase of the movement, and this by no means the most important. It was not an inherent part of the Renaissance considered as a *movement of thought.* It was related to it as the ornamental setting is related to a precious stone, or as the picturesque flame and smoke of a volcanic eruption is related to the actual upheavals of the solid crust of the earth. Pomponazzi's place in the movement is as the exponent of its profounder and more deeply seated forces. He represents the craving of the human mind for freedom—the convulsive struggle, for life and vital energy, of intellectual and religious thought, rather than the elegant expression of the former, or the poetry and imagination that adorned the latter. This, however, is the phase of the Renaissance which gives it its permanent value, and which constitutes the main ground of its kinship with modern thought. In this respect there is a considerable difference between Petrarca and Pomponazzi. The former may be said to include every phase of the Renaissance. He represents not only its free tendencies, as a new effort of thought (though he does not enter so fully as Pomponazzi into the heart of the movement), but its highest expression, as a yearning after ideal beauty. Still, it would be clearly unjust to our skeptic to refuse him his due share in the sum total of the forces which make up the composite whole we call the Renaissance, merely because he cannot be said to embody a few of its attractive, but, for the most part, superficial and evanescent features.

As a thinker of essentially modern spirit, Pomponazzi anticipated some beliefs and modes of thought which have since his time acquired greater currency. Though, as a Christian, he detached Christianity from the other religions of the world, ascribing to it a value and destiny *sui generis;* as a Philosopher, he placed it on the same level with the other 'laws,' as they were called, of Moses, of the Gentiles, and of Mahomet, just as Boccaccio did in his story of the Three Rings, or as a modern student of Comparative Religions might do. He does away also with the distinction between natural and revealed religion, uniting all the Divine teaching in the universe in one harmonious whole. He assigns moreover to causation much of its modern position as the governing principle of all natural phenomena. Nor must we pass unnoticed his catholicity of spirit. Although, as a philosopher and lecturer on Aristotle, he felt bound to oppose Averroes, there are patent correspondencies between his system and that of the great Arab commentator. Vanini, his own disciple, said that 'Pythagoras would have judged that the soul of

Averroes had transmigrated into the body of Pomponazzi,'[1] and it has been pointed out, that his opinion as to the share of the lawgiver in promoting the doctrine of Immortality and other religious beliefs—that the first man came into being by natural causes; that miracles are imaginations or wilful deceptions; that prayer and the worship of saints and relics are inefficacious; that religion is adapted only for simple people—are either taken from Averroes, or are deductions from his teaching. His doctrine of 'twofold truth' is also quite in harmony with Averroism.[2] But Pomponazzi's chief excellence, in my estimation, is the noble stand which he makes for pure unselfish morality. This is the pivot of his system, and his refuge from complete skepticism. Speculation, he has ascertained by painful experience, is hazardous and uncertain. The mutual conflicts and disputations of the great leaders of thought are productive only of doubt. In his own province of natural philosophy the case is the same.[3] He therefore turns to practice. At least there can be no mistake in virtue, and ethical perfection. To this centre all the different portions of his system, like the radii of a circle, are made to converge. He distrusts the doctrine of immortality, among other reasons, because in the form it is generally maintained he thinks it derogatory to virtue. He proclaims human liberty because it is the indispensable condition of all ethical action. The Church has its chief value and *raison d'être* as a teacher of morality. The State is a human organization devised to protect and encourage virtue. In a word, virtue is the supreme law of the universe; and the climax of perfection both in the Divine and human character; and whatever organization, ecclesiastical or political, has not this for its sole aim, or whatever doctrine or dogma does not directly or indirectly lead to it, Pomponazzi regards as worthless. All things else are liable to change: virtue, moral truth and excellence are, like their Eternal Creator, immutable.

[1] 'Petrus Pomponatius Philosophus acutissimus, in cujus corpus animam Averrois commigrasse Pythagoras judicasset.' (*Amphitheat, Prov.*, Ex. vi. p. 36.) See below, the chapter on Vanini. Renan, who places this among the number of reckless assertions on the part of Vanini, observes that if he had known anything of Pomponazzi's works, he would have found that for the most part he opposed Averroes. Still there is, as pointed out in the text, a considerable amount of similarity in the Teachings of Averroes and Pomponazzi. What the latter chiefly complained of in Averroes was his obscurity. He says, 'Laudo doctrinam ejus sed obscuritatem vitupero quia non habet partes expositoris.' Comp. Prof. Fiorentino in the *Giornale Napolitano*, Agosto, 1878, p. 117.

[2] Comp. Renan, *Averroes*, p. 274, and passim.

[3] 'In ista enim philosophia Naturali potest unusquisque dicere suo modo, quia non sunt demonstrationes in istis.' Fiorent., *Pietro Pomponazzi*, p. 514, note.

Little remains to be added on our subject. Pomponazzi's lot was cast in troublous times. His life synchronizes with some of the most remarkable events in the early history of Modern Europe. While he was peacefully lecturing at Padua, Florence was undergoing those vehement alternations of penitence and licence which mark the short-lived mission of Savonarola. Luther had already commenced his campaign against the Papacy. Rumours and portents of imminent convulsions were everywhere prevalent. Throughout the civilized world there was a 'distress of nations with perplexity.' But, for the most part these nascent forces, which were destined to change the face of Europe, passed by Pomponazzi unheeded. Like a hermit whose cell is placed on the side of a volcano, he heard the rumblings beneath, but was too much absorbed in his studies to note their purport. His whole existence, as M. Franck observes, was taken up by his books, his teaching, and his studious contemplation; so that one may say of him, as was said of Spinoza, he was 'less a man than a thought'—an impersonal embodiment of intellectual activity.

Pomponazzi died on the 18th of May, 1525. The honour in which he was held by the University of Bologna is shown by an entry of that date, in the Register of Doctors, a very unusual circumstance, we are told, in which he is styled a most excellent Philosopher; and it is added that 'by his death the University had lost its greatest ornament.' His disciple and friend, Cardinal Gonzaga, better known as the future President of the Council of Trent, caused his remains to be removed to his native Mantua, and erected a monument of bronze to his memory.

Professor Fiorentino sums up his preliminary account of Pomponazzi's life and works, by a parallel between his death and that of Socrates, which I here transcribe:—'Socrates on the approach of death—a martyr for the truth—did not flee from his fate. He did not wish to escape from the prison in which he was confined. Undisturbed, and in all serenity, he fixed his attention on Future Life. A most beautiful woman appeared to him in a dream, and appointed him a place in one of the fortunate islands.[1] "Three days hence, Socrates," she said to him, "you will arrive at fertile Phthia." Hence

[1] 'La bellissima donna apparsagli in sogno gli dà la posta per un' isola fortunata,' etc. Comp. Plato, *Criton*, and Cicero, *De Div.*, i. xxv.; but the learned Professor has mistaken the purport of the original quotation, which is from the 9th Book of the Iliad, v. 363, and relates primarily to Achilles' anticipation of *returning home*. In its secondary application to the approaching fate of Socrates, it is employed in the sense, so widely distributed, in which death and the future world are spoken of as 'home.' Cf. Stallbaum's Note, *Plato., om. Opera*, i. 126.

Socrates resisted all the entreaties of Krito, and contemplated with firmness, the poisonous draught, and even death itself; and he talked with Phædo, with Cebes and with Simmias, as with men from whom he would be parted only for a short time, and with whom there would afterwards be a common meeting in a place more beautiful and serene. The aureole of martyrdom, the anticipation of a blissful futurity soothed the bitterness of parting, and gave the dying Socrates a foretaste of the felicity which he expected—the reward reserved for his constant virtue.

'Let us now look at another picture. Pomponazzi, worn out by years, harassed by sickness, extended on the bed of pain, without the splendour of martyrdom, fought out the battle with his enemy—unseen, tardy, irresistible. Unsustained by the hope of the future, he placed before him only austere virtue, without reward and without hope, as the true and final end of the human race. Out of sympathy with the beliefs of his religion, and with the traditions of so many centuries; mocked by contemporaries, and in danger of the stake, he had no future blessedness to which to turn. He was not cheered by the smile of the beautiful woman, who invited Socrates to Phthia. He was soothed neither by Homeric fantasies, nor by the more spiritual but not less interested promises of the Christian Paradise; and notwithstanding all this, he was not disturbed by his imminent death. It behoved him, he said, to prefer duty to life. He sacrificed everything—affections, pleasure, knowledge, and the future—to rigid virtue. Which man is the more magnanimous and sublime, Socrates or Pomponazzi?' Whatever we may think of this striking parallel, we must, I think, acknowledge the greatness of Pomponazzi's life and character; as well as admit the enormous influence which he wielded as a teacher of philosophy. He founded a school, not perhaps numerically great, but possessing some very renowned names—Simon Porta the great Aristotelian of Naples, Sepulveda, Julius Cæsar Scaliger, Vanini, Zarabello and Cremonini were directly or indirectly his pupils.[1] And wherever the lessons of his life and teaching

[1] The extent to which Pomponazzi's name became identified with all the freer and anti-ecclesiastical movements of Italian thought long after his death, is well known to the student of Italian Philosophy. A striking example of this is furnished by Bishop Burnet's *Letters from Switzerland and Italy*, 1685. Thus he remarks, 'There are societies of men at Naples of freer thought than can be found in any other place of Italy. The Greek learning begins to flourish there, and the new Philosophy (Cartesianism) is much studied, and there is an assembly, that is held in D. Joseph Valeta's library, composed of men that have a right taste of true learning and good sense. They are ill-looked on by the clergy, and represented as a set of atheists, and as the spawn of Pomponatius's school; but I found no such thing among them.' P. 207.

penetrated, the spirit that animated them bore its noble fruit. There was manifested a disinterested, untiring devotion to learning, an implicit belief in the power and essential divinity of the human reason—a full persuasion that unwearied search for truth is the highest, if not the whole, duty of man. Especially was the indomitable independence of Pomponazzi's intellectual character productive of valuable results. The Renaissance had, in this respect, accomplished its mission. The newer thought to which it had given birth, which it had carefully nursed and cradled, was now able for the most part to shift for itself, and make its own way in the world. In politics, in science, in philosophy and in religion, modern thought was breaking away from the old lines and landmarks. Pomponazzi recognized and prepared for the change. All the main principles of his teaching were accepted and employed by succeeding thinkers. His doctrine of 'twofold truth,' the distinction between 'credita' and 'physica'—dogmas to be believed without question and natural phenomena to be received only after verification—was adopted by Galileo and his followers. His belief in the government of the universe by uniform and invariable laws has become the foundation-stone of all modern physical science. Lastly, and this seems to me his greatest merit: in an age when the foundations of morality and social life were undermined by the proved weakness and insecurity of the ecclesiastical sanctions on which they were hitherto based, Pomponazzi discerned the importance as well as truth of eternal and immutable morality. When Aristotle was once questioned as to the gain he had derived from philosophy, he answered, 'This, that I do from love of virtue, and hatred of vice, what you only do from hope of reward or fear of punishment.' Philosophy had taught Pomponazzi the same indomitable faith in the inherent and indestructible distinctions of morality. His lesson, and the spirit with which he urged it, was caught up or revived by Peter Charron, Spinoza, Lessing and Kant; and is gradually, we may hope, becoming more and more incorporated with the ethical teaching of our modern Europe. Like every other thinker whose energies and aspirations are hampered by harsh and unauthorized restrictions, Pomponazzi was accustomed to find in the future, with its ameliorations, a solace for the privations and shortcomings of his own time. In such a mood we may imagine him indulging in the anticipation which Lessing has put into his own glowing words: 'Sie wird kommen, sie wird gewiss kommen die Zeit der Vollendung, da der Mensch, je überzeugter sein Verstand einer immer bessern Zukunft sich fühlet, von dieser Zukunft gleichwohl Bewegungsgründe zu seinen Handlungen zu erborgen nicht nöthig haben wird, de er das Gute

thun wird weil es das Gute ist, nicht weil willkürliche Belohnungen darauf gesetzt sind, die seinen flatterhaften Blick ehedem blos heften und stärken sollten die innern besseren Belohnungen desselben zu erkennen.'

* * * * * * *

Miss Leycester. To all which I would devoutly say Amen. . . . But I hope, Dr. Trevor, you do not intend us to discuss the whole Italian Renaissance at a single sitting, because if so it is likely to be a protracted one.

Trevor. By no means. No one can be more aware of the manifoldly varied aspects of the whole movement than myself. The utmost we can do is to select a few salient or noteworthy topics from the general mass of matter I have brought before you. . . . Moreover, we must bear in mind that our main subject, round which our discussions should revolve, is Free-thought. This is the centre about which I have grouped my Italian planets, from Dante to Pomponazzi.

Arundel. Well, starting from that centre I must confess that I thought your general conclusions were frequently vitiated by a tendency too common to all investigations on the subject—I mean a disposition to exaggerate, in the direction of Free-thought, the implications derivable from the free speech of Italians. Because, for instance, the old mysteries or the Goliard or Provençal poetry, were redolent of free expression, that seems to me no sufficing warrant for inferring that the freedom was intended to be taken *au pied de la lettre.* Nothing is more remarkable in the Italian temperament—I suppose it belongs to all the Latin races—than the disproportion that exists between speech and genuine sentiment. When I first visited Italy some years ago I was greatly struck by the freedom with which young men spoke of their parents. I naturally thought that parental obedience was anything but a national virtue; but I soon found I was mistaken. Further acquaintance with the people convinced me that the young really did pay extreme deference and respect to their parents. An oft-quoted illustration of the same fact is the behaviour of the Neapolitan mob when the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius is delayed. They

call him 'villain,' 'blackguard,' and every other opprobrious name they can think of; but no sooner is the hocus-pocus successful, and the blood declared to be liquefied, than they immediately fall on their knees, and thank him with every demonstration of adoring gratitude and piety.

HARRINGTON. The characteristic is well-known; but it is not adequately described by calling it a divergence between the sentiment felt and uttered. Its source is an extreme sensitiveness or impressionability, which is apt to seem evanescent, not because it is superficial, but because it pertains to a strongly and variously emotional nature. Thus the vituperation of Neapolitans at the tardiness of Januarius is just as hearty as their profuse gratitude when he appears to accede to their wishes. Applying the argument to Renaissance literature, I should say that the expressions of Free-thought, *e.g.* in the songs of Goliards, or in the Decameron, or Morgante, must be taken for what they are—the actual sentiments of the writers at the time of writing. But we must bear in mind that the errant cleric, or Boccaccio or Pulci, might have been surprised into very different arguments and sentiments at another time.

TREVOR. I fully admit—indeed I have often been amused at this trait of Italians—nor do I think I have lost sight of it in my description of the Renaissance. When you cannot take a man's words as the symbol of his definite settled conviction, you must take his general tone, his line of reasoning, the spirit which seems to underlie his thought. This I have honestly attempted to do. As a result, it appears to me that the literature of the Renaissance is a *bona fide* expression of extreme freedom not to say licence. I am prepared, however, to acknowledge that the free sentiments of Italians, and in a lesser degree of the French, would mean somewhat more if employed by Englishmen and Germans.

ARUNDEL. With that acknowledgment I am content . . . but I might have based my objection upon other than national grounds. . . . Skepticism is precisely one of those forbidden subjects on which most men, even Germans and English, are apt to claim a licence of speech far exceeding their real opinions.

HARRINGTON. It is as well not to insist too strongly on national peculiarities in estimating the Free-thought of the Renaissance. A good deal of the liberal anti-dogmatic sentiment touched upon in Trevor's Paper, as *e.g.* the Goliard poetry, Provençal literature, the mysteries, moralities, and miracle plays, were the common possession of the whole of civilized Europe.

ARUNDEL. Another objection I feel to the Doctor's paper is that it did not appear to contain any sufficing admission of the consequences of licence of thought in inducing licence of manners. The most repulsive feature of the Renaissance, to most students, is the extreme moral laxity which seems to have affected more or less every class of society. To me this appears an inseparable attendant on and result of Skepticism. At least in the cases of Greece and Rome the advance of extreme libertine opinion, combined with skeptical inroads into ancient beliefs, synchronize exactly with a marked deterioration of social manners, and an increase of political corruption. Macchiavelli did no more than give expression to this truth when he said, that States not held together by the bonds of religion were on the road to ruin.

TREVOR. I am quite willing to concede—for that matter it would be difficult to deny—the ethical laxity of Italy during the Renaissance; but I should be inclined to ascribe it to other causes. To me it appears the joint product of several contributory agencies. First among them I should place the social disorganization which was the inevitable consequence of the political divisions of Italy, and the continual wars thereby engendered. While allied with, and to a great extent caused by, this internecine strife, must be reckoned the perpetual irruptions of foreign, and for the most part mercenary, armies. No fact is more indelibly impressed upon mediæval Italy than the peculiar and extreme lawlessness which followed, like the slime of a reptile, in the train of these foreign invaders; and this quite irrespective of their nationality or religion; for French and Spanish invaders were not much superior in this respect to the Lombards. Secondly, I should place as the next cause of social depravity, the utter corruption of the Romish

Church. For centuries it had been the policy of Rome to tie up all moral duty with religious service, in such a manner, as implicitly to deny the existence of ethical principles or conduct outside her pale. The consequence was, that when her corruption and depravity became too conspicuous to be denied, the whole fabric of moral duty tended to crumble to its ruin. I have however said enough on this point in my paper. Thirdly, we must, as I have more than once remarked, make fair allowance for the natural tendency of new-born freedom to rush into excess. It is now an acknowledged law of history that no great liberating movement, begotten of intellectual and social fermentation, and having for its object the enfranchisement of the long enslaved conscience and intellect of humanity, can be accomplished without excesses. Indeed, it seems a general law of the universe that a new birth of any kind is only consummated at the cost of much pain and suffering. Christ's own announcement of the effect of His revelation, 'Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth: I tell you nay, but rather a sword,' is applicable to every revolution whose object is the Divine cause of justice and freedom. . . . You must also remember that, on the principle of necessity being the mother of invention, the lawlessness of the Renaissance had the effect of inciting men to discover remedies for it. Machiavelli's *Prince* indicates one remedy, perhaps then the most obvious—political force and coercion. Another, and better, was the tendency to throw off ecclesiasticism, and to return to the primary foundation and ethics of the gospel—while Pomponazzi, as we saw, went a step further, and sought for it in the intrinsic claims of virtue, and the natural repulsiveness of vice.

HARRINGTON. Your plea, I think, is justifiable; but you seem to me to have slightly waived the main issue. The question is: Did Skepticism of itself induce a laxity of manners in those who adopted it? I think it must have done so in certain cases. Nor should I deem that such a concession contains anything derogatory to Skepticism. There are few principles in the world so inherently faultless as not to disclose in their working and operation upon differently constituted characters various seamy sides.

Miss Leycester. There is also another reply to Mr. Arundel's objection. The expressions of libertine and profane thought which we find in Renaissance literature may be far in excess of real action or usual habit, just as skeptical expressions may have implied a greater latitude of thought than really existed. . . . What appears to me the most remarkable feature in the history of the period is the 'Weltschmerz' of some of its leading thinkers. There is something pathetically ironical in the fact that men who laid such stress on Naturalism, and who resuscitated the long-lost belief in the joys and duties of mundane existence, extinguished as it was by mediæval asceticism and other-worldliness—should have suffered so severely from what I suppose must have been a sense of the worthless or unsatisfactory nature of their effects. One is inclined to ask, does unsufferable ennui follow upon an exaggerated estimate of terrestrial existence, for a similar reason that Pessimism and Nihilism tread on the heels of Materialism?

Harrington. It seems difficult to lay down any absolute rule for aberrations of human sentiment, even when they are manifested as general characteristics of any particular epoch. For myself, I should say that in the Italian Renaissance the feeling was a relic of that extreme asceticism of mediæval times to which you have alluded.

Arundel. On the other hand, it may have been a reaction from the mundane enjoyments men sought to find in establishing Nature as their Deity, and obedience to her behests as their duty. Both the conception, and its actual practice, could not but cloy, in the case of intellects so comprehensive and feelings so profound as *e.g.* those of Petrarca.

Trevor. My theory of the matter is much more simple. 'Weltschmerz,' or intellectual ennui, is not an affection confined to any age, or to any particular type of thought. It is, in my opinion, totally independent of all general movements, whether in religion or anything else. I regard it merely as the reaction which under all circumstances follows intellectual labour, the lassitude that follows over-tension of brain-tissue. Depression is, as all students know, the invariable concomitant

of severe intellectual work; and if not resisted may easily lead to a systematic contempt for existence, such as that displayed by Petrarca, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini. . . . I need not add that, when strongly marked, it is often a precursor of cerebral disease.

Miss Leycester. Of course we cannot pretend to dispute your opinion when medical subjects are concerned; but it seems to me clear that the feeling we are discussing does present itself in epochs. We have seen it strongly marked in the Renaissance. We find it again in the French Revival of Literature, immediately preceding the Revolution. Traces of it present themselves in our Elizabethan era. It is strongly impressed upon the German 'Sturm und Drang,' and lastly it is dominant in the absurd Pessimism of German present-day thought—the lowest depths to which German speculation has yet reached.

Trevor. You might have added the Augustan period of Roman literature—our theories, however, are not altogether irreconcilable. Grant that 'Weltschmerz' is a reaction after severe mental toil, and it will naturally present itself as a general feature of every epoch of unusual intellectual activity. All I wish to protest against is the consideration of it as an epidemic or contagious disease. It is entirely individual; and depends upon the cerebral and nervous constitution of the sufferer. An induction of its more celebrated victims will readily show us that it manifests itself in most cases where the sentiment or imagination of the student predominates over his purely intellectual faculties. Indeed, the measure of resistance that a severe brain-worker is able to oppose to the feeling forms a fair criterion of the native vigour and recuperative energy of his intellect.

Harrington. I have never seen brought out so fully as I think the subject deserves, the intimate connexion that existed between Italy and England, as regards the Naturalism that marks the Renaissance of the former and the Reformation of the latter country. Shakespere and Ben Jonson may stand as types of the tendency in the Elizabethan Age, as Boccaccio, Pulci and Ariosto in the Renaissance. In both schools there

is the same vigorous vitality—the same healthy appreciation of mundane existence. So far as originality goes, the palm, I suppose, must be assigned to Italy. Indeed, the extent of indebtedness of our Elizabethan literature to the Italian Renaissance, which our literary historians are only beginning to recognise at its full value, seems to me quite embarrassing. Not only the materials for the Shaksperian dramas, to take the most conspicuous instance, but the spirit which evolved them, are importations from the Golden Age of Italian literature. Hence, if Shakspere is—to use a phrase of Jacobi's—'a Christian in heart, in intellect he is a pagan'; and his paganism has most of the attributes of the Renaissance product of the same name—a clear perception and forcible grasp of terrestrial realities and enjoyments, combined with a contemptuous ignoring of speculative truths, whether philosophical or theological. It would not be very difficult, in my opinion, to prove that Shakespere is himself more than half a skeptic.

TREVOR. For that matter, the difficulty in these days is to affirm what Shakspere has not been demonstrated to have been. Certainly he knew how to dramatize doubt in action. For doubt in speculation I cannot believe that he cared. His own idiosyncrasies were so entirely and exclusively practical that he was content to ignore all theorizings of whatever kind. Therein lies, in my opinion, his inferiority to Goethe.

MISS LEYCESTER. Goethe no doubt displays the warp and woof—the visible texture—of his speculations more clearly than does Shakspere. That seems the greatest distinction between them. Goethe shows us his metaphysical ratiocinations in the making; but Shakspere gives us his as the finished product—the woven material of his mental loom applied to the ordinary uses of human existence. Hence we may regard his practical tendency as the final result of effective contemplation, and definitively attained conclusions, on the problems of the universe. There are many passages in his works which appear to me to show that this was the case. This would rather prove than disprove his Skepticism; for, as we know, the concrete and practical is a favourite refuge for all doubters from the uncertainties and disappointments of pure speculation

. . . but I have myself a few criticisms to offer on Dr. Trevor's Paper. First, as to Dante, regarding him from the standpoint of Free-thought; I should have liked some account of the effect produced by the *Divina Commœdia* on subsequent popular theology. I refer especially to the *Inferno*, and what I consider the mischievous results of its vividly realistic pictures in directing, confirming and intensifying ordinary belief in the eternity and severity of hell-torments. The thinkers, I quite grant, were affected in quite an opposite direction. Instead of persuasion, the horrible torments of the *Inferno* induced in them a healthy repulsion. While as to its eternity, Pulci proves its injustice in a single couplet. It is in the complaint of that most anti-diabolical devil Ashtaroth, who contrasts the ready pardon granted, for a single petition, to Christians with the inexorable doom of himself and his fallen brethren:—

> 'Noi peccammo una volta, e in sempiterno
> Rilegati siam tutti nello inferno.'[1]

But on the ignorant, the timid and unreflecting, the atrocities of the *Inferno* must have exercised a most pernicious influence. Literature, in the person of its highest living representative, had come forward to supplement and corroborate the superstitious teaching of friars and preachers. It thus threw men still more into the selfish grasp of the Church. Who would not have sacrificed his last farthing in delivering a dear friend from the miseries of some of these filthy bolgias, which Dante's ungainly imagination had painted in such loathsome colours? Moreover, the extra punishments he awarded to heretics, combined with the similar treatment of those unfortunate speculators in Italian religious art, must have tended, in many cases, to repress all independent thought. In short, the *Inferno* of Dante, whatever its merits as a work of poetry, added indefinitely to the harshness and severity of a doctrine which under any form is painfully repulsive to a humane mind.

HARRINGTON. I think you exaggerate the effects of a purely

[1] *Morgante*, Canto xxv. str. 284.

imaginative work upon the average mental faculties of mankind. Men's convictions, in most cases, are not permanently modified by appeals to their sympathies which they know are founded on fictitious bases. Take the case *e.g.* of a novel reader whose feelings are sought to be enlisted on the side of an imaginary hero or heroine, of whose principles or conduct he may not approve—the sympathy he might otherwise have felt will, in this particular instance, be counteracted by dissentient conviction. Or take the case of a cultured Unitarian who listens to the Passion-music of Handel's Messiah. He may feel for the time his emotions stirred by music and words from whose implication, regarded as dogmatic propositions, he altogether dissents. Similarly, readers of Dante's *Inferno* might be pleasurably affected by the poetic beauties of the work, and yet, unless their convictions had already been pledged, would neither feel increased anxiety for departed relatives, nor would they abstain from speculation on account of the punishment supposed to be inflicted on errant thinkers.

Miss Leycester. But you are begging my whole position, Charles. The *Inferno* of Dante was addressed to men whose convictions were already, and most heartily, enlisted in its favour. The poem was a vivid elaboration of a doctrine they had long believed, upon what they regarded infallible authority. It was just this confirmation and detailed elaboration of an old article of their faith, that made the *Inferno* so dangerous.

Mrs. Harrington. My own criticism of the *Divina Commœdia* is, that it appears to me an unsatisfactory handling of the whole theme. No doubt it is full of poetic beauties; but neither the *Purgatorio* nor *Paradiso*—the *Inferno* I omit as a non-existent state—convey my ideal of the future world. Indeed the *Paradiso*, for the most part, is only a celestial canopy designed for the especial purpose of the enthronization of Beatrice.

Arundel. I suspect, Mrs. Harrington, that like so many other readers of Dante, your dislike of *Il Paradiso* is founded upon what is in reality its most marvellous feature, *i.e.* its exceedingly impalpable and superhuman character. It soars so far above the sphere of our ordinary occupations, thoughts

and interests, that it necessarily forfeits some measure of our active sympathy. It is very remarkable that the division of the *Commœdia* in which humanity approximates most to our actual experience (I am not speaking satirically)—I mean the *Inferno*—has always been that part of it which has commanded most general appreciation. As to Beatrice, I readily grant that, even in her heavenly character of Theology, she occupies a disproportionate space in the common home of all the blessed. She is, besides, too ecclesiastical and dogmatically speculative to be Christian after the mind of Christ.

Miss Leycester. Speaking of the celestial Beatrice of Dante, we are naturally reminded of her sister in literature—the beatified Laura of Petrarca. In your remarks on Petrarca, Doctor Trevor, you did not assign a philosophical reason why the cult of women assumed the rather extravagant form it seems to have attained in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Are we to take it as an outcome of chivalry, or of religion?

Trevor. Primarily, I should say, of religion; secondarily and directly, of chivalry. The gradual growth of Mariolatry in the Church, together with the mingled refinement of manners and deference to women engendered by the intercourse of Europe with the East, furnished a double foundation, sacred as well as secular, for the fancies of Dante and Petrarca—not to mention the personal tendencies of those two poets.

Harrington. I must say, Doctor, that I thought you gave an ingenious but not quite fair advantage to Skepticism, in the case of Petrarca, by making his Laura the ætherialized symbol of unattained desire. No doubt his passion for her became ennobled and sublimated as he grew older, but its ultimate form was rather a spiritual type of womanliness than that of unrealized aspiration. Petrarca's Skepticism was not, I think, sufficiently pronounced to have suggested such an excogitation.

Trevor. My reason for that view, which was thoroughly well considered, was Petrarca's undeniable melancholy as he approached the end of his life. All his later writings betray such a profound sense of the vanity of mundane existence and objects—such a tender, wistful longing for some worthier

attainment—while, *pari-passu* with the growth of these feelings there is an increased appreciation of the spiritual excellencies of Laura, that any other interpretation of her final relation to Petrarca is to me almost inconceivable. This view seems moreover confirmed by many expressions in the latter half of his *Rime;* several passages of which I had marked for quotation, but omitted in order to save time. As to Petrarca's Skepticism, it was of a mingled quality. It was not exclusively, or even mainly, an intellectual product, being just as much emotional and sentimental. It was the outcome of passions unsatisfied, aspirations unrealized, as well as of truth unattained. He is, in point of fact, an interesting example of the combination of intellectual distrust with emotional dissatisfaction—a kind of mystical skeptic.

ARUNDEL. On the subject of Boccaccio, Trevor, I must enter a protest against your interpretation of his *Three Rings.* You seemed to imply that the story contained nothing derogatory to Christianity. I cannot perceive how, from the standpoint you adopted, you could have arrived at that conclusion. Certainly, if the story as you interpreted it teaches anything, it teaches the co-equality of all Religions; and from that point of view Christianity can claim no superiority over the other two Semitic creeds; and there is therefore no real reason why Christians might not become Jews or Mahomedans. Now while I readily admit that every form of faith may have its own good sides, and that there is a peculiar suitability of the great religions of the world to the races among which they originated—while also I repudiate the conclusion that the Divine love is confined exclusively to those of my own creed; still I cannot, as a Christian, allow that Judaism and Mahometanism are on precisely the same level with my own faith. Nor do I think your interpretation of the story justified, either by its original form in the *Decameron*, or by Lessing's readaptation in *Nathan der Weise.* In the two cases the original ring remains. Boccaccio expressly calls it the True Ring, and the other two are therefore only imitations. It appears to me that this single fact is of itself enough to set aside the complete co-equality of the three rings. Boccaccio implies

that next in merit to Christianity—the original ring, and the prototype and exemplar of the other two—stand the remaining rings, Judaism and Mahomedanism.

TREVOR. I can appreciate the feeling which prompts your objection; but the real question at issue is concerned with Boccaccio's words. These must, I think, be held to signify that the three rings are of precisely similar construction, and of equal value. Moreover, it is the father himself who has copies made of the original ring; and why? *Not* as you would imply, to mark a preference for one son above another, but for the very opposite reason,—because he loved his three sons equally and would make no invidious distinction of one above the rest. . . . But stay! Here is a good translation of the *Decameron*. I will hand it to Harrington; and let him decide the matter.

HARRINGTON. Thanks, I don't want the translation. I remember Boccaccio's words perfectly well, and their only meaning is, in my opinion, what the Doctor contends for. I can find nothing on which to base the conclusion of designed inequality in the worth of the rings. The declared intention of the father is that the rings should be absolutely indistinguishable, both in construction and value, one from the other. Lessing's words—

> '. . . Da er ihm die Ringe bringt
> Kann selbst der Vater seinen Musterring
> Nicht unterscheiden'—

are almost a literal rendering of Boccaccio. Besides, the original ring, if it be distinguishable from the other two, must have been not Christianity but Judaism, as the earliest Semitic faith. I won't say that this interpretation of the relations of Christianity to the other two creeds is without difficulties. Still this is, in my judgment, the meaning of Boccaccio's words; and this construction of them is rather intensified than lessened in *Nathan der Weise*.

MISS LEYCESTER. My solution of Mr. Arundel's difficulty, and the reconciliation for Christians of the pre-eminence of their faith with a due recognition of the merits of Judaism and Mahomedanism would be this:—The three start from a

common origin, and possess, for the most part fundamentals in common. That is, they have all three alike an ethical basis. They aim at establishing virtue and goodness, justice and charity, among men. Judaism, Christianity and Mahomedanism have in this respect a common object. But in carrying out and developing that object, the means may vary; and Christianity may well, to a thoughtful Christian, seem to have superior sanctions, higher affinities, historical and otherwise, and to lead generally to a nobler life. But so far as the moral bases, the direct intention, the indispensable requisites of the religions are concerned, the three rings may be said to be identical.

ARUNDEL. I cannot accept your rendering of Boccaccio's words; nor can I admit Miss Leycester's ingenious comment upon them. If your construction held good, Boccaccio would be a complete Skeptic, maintaining the absolute indifference of all religious creeds; and that would be an inference directly contradicted by his whole life.

MISS LEYCESTER. I could have wished, Dr. Trevor, that you had expended a little more space on Pulci. As a type of the general Skepticism of the Renaissance, I think he stands higher than Pomponazzi; who seems to me too terribly in earnest to be an exponent of a movement that had so many lighter elements of gaiety, frivolity and insouciance intermingled with it. Besides which, Pomponazzi's Skepticism was altogether an academic product. It was the Free-thought of Pulci and Ariosto that formed the topics of conversation at the courts of Italian princes, and in the mansions of Florentine merchants. Pulci, in short, was a free-thinker in *Belles Lettres;* Pomponazzi in the severest walks of philosophy. Now the general literature and popular affinities of the Renaissance seem to affect the former much more than they do the latter.

TREVOR. I quite acknowledge Pulci's claims from the standpoint you mention. He is, as you say, the free-thinker of courts and of literary and civic circles. But for that very reason his contribution to the Free-thought of the Renaissance is not so permanently valuable as that of Pomponazzi. Wit, banter and sarcasm have their fitting place in every intel-

lectual movement; but those agencies are neither so effective nor so durable as intellectual power. Pomponazzi is especially the thinker—the reasoner; and it is in its ratiocination, in the free and independent play of the purely intellectual faculties, that the especial value of the Renaissance to European thought chiefly consists.

HARRINGTON. I was glad to hear you place Pulci's Devil Ashtaroth, on a higher pedestal than Dante's malicious monkey-fiends, Milton's diabolical giant, or Goethe's sneering demon. All the latter creations seem to me to savour strongly of melo-drama, and to betray a tendency to the excessive denigration against which a common proverb warns us. Now once grant the ordinary theological account of the origin of these infernal spirits, and all such representations must appear over-strained and exaggerated. Their very title, 'fallen angels,' implies that half mournful reminiscence of other times to which Ashtaroth so plaintively refers; and his plea is confirmed by the psychological experience which assures us that an entire elimination of inherent tendencies, and a substitution, as complete of others diametrically opposite, is *à priori* an enormous improbability.

ARUNDEL. For my part, I prefer Milton's Satan, with his genuine diabolical utterance 'Evil, be thou my good.' We cannot apply psychological laws derived from introspection of our human faculties to possible changes in the minds of superhuman spirits. Largeness of capacity implies greatness of possible movement or transmutation, and I can readily conceive how all the noble passions of the great archangel might have been perverted by his ambition, just as wine turns to vinegar. Nor indeed are there lacking examples of a similar kind of transformation in human nature. Besides, the evil of Milton's Satan is a distinct positive entity, the very idea of which provokes violent antagonism—that of Pulci's Ashtaroth is a mild diluted evil, more suggestive of acquiescence than repulsion; and the former seems on that ground more in harmony with the strong positive qualities of evil as we know it in the world.

MISS LEYCESTER. Do you think so, Mr. Arundel? For my

part all my experience tends in an opposite direction. I never yet have found evil with no trace of goodness either in or associated with it—without some palliative or redeeming trait. Evil, as we know it, seems therefore to be quite of the type of Ashtaroth, instead of the unqualified wickedness of Milton's Satan, or the combined cunning and malevolence of Goethe's Mephistophiles.

HARRINGTON. Another protest which I think should be entered against part of your paper refers to your treatment of Machiavelli. I think you have hardly done justice to that most eminent thinker, nor to the political theories associated with his name. The justification you half grudgingly awarded to him on account of the state of Italy appears to me to amount to a complete exoneration. No one except a practical statesman, and such Machiavelli undoubtedly was, can grapple with the imperious necessities of certain political disorders. The remedy must oftentimes be severe because of the severity of the disease. It is a case of 'kill or cure.' Now, taking Sismondi's *Republics* as a guide to the state of Italy in the sixteenth century, it seems difficult to conceive how any other remedy than the extreme one prescribed by Machiavelli could have met the urgency of the case. A tyranny, strong, masterful and unscrupulous was the only conceivable process by which order could be introduced into the anarchy and confusion then rampant in Italy. Gervinus said of the polity of Ancient Rome that it was based on the dictum 'Necessitas non habet leges.' The good of the Republic was the single aim of her statesmen and generals; and to this 'Supreme Law' every other consideration was subordinated. Indeed many writers of the highest mark have agreed that, in dangerous political conjunctures, recourse may be had to extreme measures. Jean Paul *e.g.* defended the deed of Charlotte Corday as an act of ethical retribution. Schiller in his dramas repeatedly allows an appeal to crime in the interests of society and of freedom, while Goethe says:—

> 'Jeder Weg zu rechtem Zwecke
> Ist auch recht auf jeder Strecke.'[1]

[1] These words were written some years since, and it is not intended to claim

TREVOR.—I entirely dissent from your line of argument, which is nothing less than the apology which all despots and tyrants have known how to make for themselves, and their measures of coercion and repression. I don't wish to deny that there may arise occasionally political conjunctures which, like the Gordian knot, admit of no solution except that of the sword, but it does not seem to me that the state of Italy in the sixteenth century was precisely of this kind, nor do I feel sure that the bulk of its people did not enjoy a larger measure of political and religious freedom than we, at this distance of time, think possible. Machiavelli, with all his pretended love of liberty, shows most clearly that he distrusts it; and that his sole principle of social order is brute force. This is also proved by his unworthy conception of humanity. For with men as he supposes them — compounds of weakness and wickedness—a pitiless tyranny would doubtless be the most effectual rule. Nor can I admit, even as a temporary expedient, the sacrifice of liberty — freedom of thought and speech—at the shrine of social order. Order doubtless is good, but freedom is still better, and for my part I could acquiesce even in a certain amount of lawlessness, if it could be shown that it was an inevitable result of freedom, rather than I would in a tyranny which involved slavery.

MISS LEYCESTER. In your account of Pomponazzi you omitted one thing, Dr. Trevor. You did not give us Boccalini's amusing satire on him and his doctrine of double truth.

TREVOR. The omission was intentional, Miss Leycester: I meant to read during our discussion the rendering of the passage in the Earl of Monmouth's translation of *Advertise-*

for them any novelty in respect of a defence of Machiavellianism in politics. They merely indicate the lines on which such a defence has been variously placed, from the publication *e.g.* of Gabriel Naudé's *Considerations Politiques sur les Coups d'Etat*, 1712, to Lord Acton's Introduction to Mr. Burd's *Il Principe*, 1891. The latter concludes with a sentence so applicable to the above theory as to deserve quotation. Machiavelli 'is more rationally intelligible when illustrated by lights falling not only from the century he wrote in, but from our own, which has seen the course of its history twenty-five times diverted by actual or attempted crime.'

ments from Parnassus.[1] Here it is:—'Pietro Pomponatio, a Mantuan, appeared next' (before Apollo, who is supposed to be engaged in judging the most renowned literary characters of all time) 'all besmeared with sweat, and very ill accoutred, who was found composing a book wherein, by foolish and sophistical arguments, he endeavoured to prove that the soul of man was mortal. Apollo, not able to look upon so wicked a wretch, commanded that his library should be presently burnt; and that he himself should be consumed in the same flames: for that fool deserved not the advantage of books who laboured thereby only to prove that men were beasts. Pomponatio cryed out then with a loud voice, protesting that he believed the mortality of the soul only as a philosopher. Then said Apollo to the executioners: let him be burnt only as a philosopher.'

HARRINGTON.—How curiously all these stories are linked together. The anecdote you have read is clearly related to the well-known story of the German Prince-Bishop; who being remonstrated with for undue freedom of language, replied that 'he swore as a Prince, not as a Bishop;' on which the question was asked, 'When the Devil took possession of the Prince what would become of the Bishop?' a story by the way which would seem to show that the doctrine of double truth, or disparate responsibility, is not limited to philosophy. Indeed the convenience of such a principle in ethics is obvious. You have something of that sort too among the fanatical sectaries of the Commonwealth; who held that whatever sin they committed was due to 'the Old Adam,' and formed no part of their own regenerate nature.

MISS LEYCESTER. What an interesting feature of mediæval manners those philosophical jousts must have been. I suppose it would be too superficial a mode of accounting for them to say that they were suggested by the prevailing taste for tournaments—the wish to test intellectual prowess by the same means as physical. It seems a pity we have nothing of the same kind now in our universities. The contest of a

[1] *Advertisements from Parnassus*, etc.; translated by the Earl of Monmouth. 2nd Edition, 1669, p. 158.

well-matched pair of Professors representing say, the intuitional and experimental philosophy, or ecclesiasticism and rationalism, would be an interesting spectacle.

ARUNDEL. More interesting than useful I think. The qualities needed for success, in a contest of this kind, are peculiar and, to my mind, not of the highest merit. A great amount of assurance, controversial astuteness, combined with readiness and fluency, are the most necessary; and these are not invariably combined with learning, or profound intellectual power. Besides which, they were generally inefficacious; and the hearers left the arena with precisely the same opinions as they entered it. The intellectual gain to European culture from the numberless controversies with which the halls of mediæval universities resounded seems to me very doubtful. The elder Casaubon summed up that matter years ago, when, on being shown the great hall of the Sorbonne, and the attendant remarking that it was the place where all the great Doctors disputed, he quietly asked—'Aye, and what have they settled?'

TREVOR. I fear the same question might be put to most branches and methods of human enquiry. But the mediæval free-trade in teaching, for it almost amounted to that, was not so ineffectual as you think. When Abelard emptied his rival's lecture room in Paris, and Pomponazzi repeated the exploit in Padua, both victorious professors being avowedly champions of Free-thought, such a fact speaks well for the docility and true instincts of the pupils, as well as for the power of the teachers.

MISS LEYCESTER. I confess I am radical enough to wish for a return to the freedom of teaching which existed in those days. What can be more humdrum, stereotyped and conventional than our modern university usages, with their protectionism and exclusiveness in every department of thought. I have been lately reading, with intense enjoyment, Remusat's dramatised *Abelard*. Take the scene depicted in that work of the young Breton student's controversy with the renowned William of Champeaux. What vigour and animation is there displayed. The whole scene is instinct with full, fresh and free intellectual life. Even the turbulence of the students is

only the youthful expression of mental excitation. Compare such a scene with the dull routine of an English University Lecture Room in our own days, and who would not prefer the life and freedom of Paris in the thirteenth century to the staid and respectable, but hopelessly apathetic, proceedings of *e.g.* an Oxford 'Lecture' of our own day. Moreover, what a reflection upon our boasted advance in liberty and civilization,—the remark I may say does not apply to German Universities, who have never given up their prerogative of free-trade in teaching—that if a modern Abelard or Pomponazzi were to appear at one of our great seats of learning, he could not find a room in which to deliver his lectures.

ARUNDEL. Well, he might hire the Town Hall of the Mayor for a couple of guineas!

HARRINGTON. But the poor wandering lecturer might not have so much money, or if he had, and chose to invest it in the way you suggest, the authorities would, in the case of a Pomponazzi, prohibit the attendance of the undergraduates. . . . But I fear your German ideas, Florence, make you unjust to our more decorous English customs. Under the antiquated and formal usages of our Universities you would find more 'liberty of prophesying' than you are aware of. At present there is, I am informed, not a single phase of thought, in Church or nation, which has not its exponent, generally an able one, in our University chairs. When I was at Oxford, twenty-five years ago, there was a much more limited selection; but in those days we supplemented by private enterprise the deficiencies of our national seminaries. I was a member of a club of advanced thinkers in which we broached and discussed many things which were then little thought of, but which have since come to the surface of English speculation. I am inclined to think that our private debating club, which we called the Synagogue, was of real service to me in my profession; and I know fellow-members who have since achieved distinction, both at the Bar and in the House of Commons, who ascribe the foundation of their debating power to the practice of free and full discussion which we thus privately enjoyed in our university days.

TREVOR. No doubt such debates are useful for certain purposes; and so must also have been the dialectical contests in the Universities of the middle ages; but their peculiar merits were better adapted, I think, to meet the wants of those days than similar exhibitions would be to supply our own. Liberty enjoys a wider scope and a greater variety of existence now than she did then. With a free printing press, a man who has anything worth communicating can, as a rule, labour under no difficulty as to the means; and to my mind the cold unimpassioned utterances of the press are better adapted to philosophical discussion than the warmth of debate and personal altercation, besides being more dignified and impartial.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I want to know what possible interest a Paduan or Parisian citizen could have in debates which he would hardly understand, carried on as they were in Latin. He could not even know, of himself, which of the champions came off best. Whereas if he went to a tournament or some contest of physical strength he would have ocular demonstration of the final result.

ARUNDEL. There was a considerable circulation of a kind of popular student Latinity in all the mediæval university towns; so that the terms more frequently used in debate were well recognised by the average citizen. As to the victorious combatant, perhaps the citizen identified him by the same token as the rustic on a similar occasion, who said 'He could see who was the first, that put t'other fellow in a passion.'

HARRINGTON. There are several more points in Pomponazzi that suggest discussion. Take *e.g.* the storm of indignation which his book on Immortality raised, and his attempt to meet it by the plea of 'twofold truth.' Theologians are never tired of telling us that our religious beliefs are based on faith, and are not dependent on the reason. Yet the moment a belief is professed avowedly independent of all reason, they immediately exclaim against it as infidel, blasphemous, or at least heterodox. What is this but a tacit acknowledgment that the reason must have some part in every sincere conviction which a man has?

ARUNDEL. In the majority of cases the religious beliefs of

men are founded on the unconditional demand of faith, and owe little or nothing to the approval or disapproval of the reason. The difficulties of theologians commence with the minority who bring all convictions indifferently to the bar of its judgment. In such cases no doubt they distrust, though rather illogically, a conviction ostensibly based upon faith, revelation, or religious intuition, when it is unaccompanied by the approval of the reason; but I confess the inconsistency which must needs include reason as an element of all well-founded conviction seems to me not only justifiable but happy. Hence if a friend were to assure me that he believed a doctrine solely on the ground of Revelation, though all the facts of the case appeared to him to militate against it as a scientific truth, I am not sure that as a clergyman I should have any ground for remonstrating with his faith as imperfect, though as a philosopher, I should certainly think that it needed some *reasonable* presumption to give it the validity which every genuine belief should possess.

HARRINGTON. We are getting back into our former discussion on 'Double Truth.' But you must take care, Arundel. If you divide yourself into two personalities, philosophical and theological, you will be treading on the heels of Pomponazzi. . . . By the way, the 'absolute morality' of the Italian thinker suggested to my mind a speculation with which I have often entertained myself as to the future of philosophical and ethical thought. Since the time of Kant, antinomies and categorical imperatives, or ultimate truths in which contradictions converge, are continually assuming a larger importance both in philosophy and theology.[1] We are, I think, approaching a time in which the simple affirmative 'It is so,' or 'It must be so' will be the *ne plus ultra* of all ratiocination, and the basis of all religion and morality. So philosophy will end in dogma of the most decisive and unconditional kind; and her progress will have been like a stormy ocean dividing two solid continents—a philosophical Atlantic, separating, yet forming a highway between, an old world of metaphysical

[1] Among more recent illustrations of this tendency may be noted Lotze in Germany; and Darwin, and H. Spencer, in England.

dogma and a new world of positive or scientific dogma—or like the human maturity of independent thought, which separates the unreasoned convictions of childhood from the senile obstinacy of old age.

MISS LEYCESTER. Why, Charles, your predicted 'Future' will be quite a 'Ladies' epoch.' Our sex has long since attained the culmination of philosophy, if that is to consist of an immediate intuition or simple determination which disdains all reasoning and is impervious to all argument. What a forcible justification, by the way, of the anticipation of the advocates of woman's rights, that our sex is destined in some remote future to occupy its own place as the head of the intellectual universe.

ARUNDEL. Moreover there is another still more *dire* contingency, if that be possible—when all the religious and philosophical problems of the universe have been thus reduced to a few infallible propositions. What would become of the Skeptics?

TREVOR. Of course we should start afresh by analysing the supposed propositions, and protesting against their claim to infallibility. I cannot say, Harrington, that I agree with your forecast. The resources of the human intellect appear to me to be boundless and therefore inexhaustible. I do not even share the opinion of Comte and others, who think that metaphysics have arrived at the end of their tether, and that the Future of human enquiry pertains entirely to physical science. Physics without the 'Meta' are only conceivable in an universe where nothing is unknown; or where human faculties are incapable of the faintest degree of imagination or idealization. Either supposition is practically inconceivable. That physics will absorb more of human attention in the future than its ally is, I think, probable; nor need we deprecate such an event. I however agree with you so far, that I think our scientists are daily becoming more dogmatic; thus reproducing the very fault which they usually find most reason to reprehend in metaphysics.

HARRINGTON. Returning to Pomponazzi—I was struck by the fact of his sincerity, so affectingly disclosed in the com-

parison of himself and his lot to Prometheus. It would appear that there were problems of which he could not accept 'Two-fold Truth' as an adequate solution. This sufficed when he dealt with the dogmas of the Church; but when he came to antinomies inherent in the constitution of the universe—when it was no longer 'Philosophy versus Theology,' but 'Philosophy versus itself'—then he found himself foiled and vanquished.

ARUNDEL. If his end was accelerated in the way Trevor suggested, by opposing his finite intellect to the insolubilities of the universe, I think I can supply you with a better illustration of his fate than the comparison of sea waves vainly dashing themselves against a rock. I heard a story the other day of a Wiltshire farmer of the olden time, when land was cheap and corn dear, and agriculture was pursued in the happy-go-lucky manner which such circumstances might be expected to produce. His name was Dobbs, and he used to live in this neighbourhood. When Dobbs grew old he was compelled to seek for assistance in his farm work; so he brought home from Salisbury fair one day a stalwart ploughman whom, on the morrow, he sent into a field to plough. Alas! before dinner time the new man returned from his work bringing with him a broken ploughshare, and told Dobbs he had broken it while ploughing into a large dock-root which stood in the middle of the field. His master, after eyeing him for a moment with supreme contempt, broke out, 'Ah, I zee thee'rt only a fule after all. Why, I've ploughed round thik old dock every year for this vifty year and never broke a sheer in my life. Thee'd best go about thy business.' It seems to me that Pomponazzi is like the ploughshare, which snapped because it would persist in encountering the hard root which lay directly in its path.

TREVOR. But you see it is not every ploughman who has learnt, or is able to appreciate, Dobbs' method of ploughing round an obstacle. Some intellects must, at whatever cost, plough a straight furrow.

MISS LEYCESTER. Besides which, Mr. Arundel, the dock had no business there; and the ploughshare broke in doing its duty.

ARUNDEL. In an universe so full of tough problems as ours, a field without its ancient and indestructible dock-root might be considered an anomaly.

GIORDANO BRUNO.

'*Veritas, a quocunque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est.*'

St. Ambrose.

'*Die wenigen, die was davon erkannt*
Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.'

Goethe, *Faust.*

'*Religious disbelief and philosophical skepticism are not merely not the same, but have no natural connection.*'

Sir Wm. Hamilton, *Appendix to Lectures*, i. 394.

'*Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,*
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly,
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any Revelation called Divine.
No dogmas nail your faith, and what remains;
But say so, like the honest man you are?'

Browning, *Works*, vol. v. p. 267.

CHAPTER IV.

GIORDANO BRUNO.

HARRINGTON. We discuss to-night a name of rare interest. We may mark it with red letters in our calendar of Free-thought, as *Giordano Bruno, Apostle and Martyr.*[1]

[1] The following are the works and authorities cited in this chapter:—

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Settembrini, *Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana.* ii. p. 400.

Bruno's chief Lullian Treatises are quoted from *Lulli opera.* Argentorati 1651.

Grundlinien einer Ethik bei Giordano Bruno, von E. B. Hartung. 1878.

ARUNDEL. Yes, when we want to start a new Secular Calendar of Saints and Martyrs after the model of Auguste Comte's.

MISS LEYCESTER. I object altogether to the distinction between secular and sacred as a definition of martyrdom. Every genuine martyrdom—the sacrifice of life for truth—is sacred. Sokrates and Giordano Bruno are, in my estimation, just as sacred as any martyr in the Christian calendar.

ARUNDEL. But surely the kind of truth for which the martyr suffers must enter as a prime consideration into the meritoriousness of the act. The distinction must be enormous between a death endured for the noblest and highest truth, and for some trivial distinction or petty belief—it may even be a falsehood—or an emanation of the grossest ignorance or superstition.

MISS LEYCESTER. From the sufferer's own point of view there can be no such distinction; and it is that, I apprehend, which determines the fact of his martyrdom. What you consider a petty belief, he evidently regards as a matter of the greatest moment. He attests his conviction in the most solemn and authentic manner by sealing it with his death.

ARUNDEL. Your apprehension, Miss Leycester, is, I conceive, a misapprehension. Take the derivation of the word martyr. It means simply a witness, *i.e.* an attestator of some truth: the stress being evidently placed upon the truth so attested. For truth, in the sense of a verity which is eternal, must always be of greater importance than the witness who pleads it as his own personal conviction. It is the holiness or truth of the cause that elevates what might otherwise be merely an act of fanaticism and perversity, to the sublime category of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. There are people in this country, for instance, who still persist in believing that the earth is flat, or who are fully persuaded of the supernatural power of witches. Suppose them ready to suffer death for their

The last named *brochure* is one of the many monographs on detached portions of Bruno's works and teaching which have appeared in Germany, as well as in France and Italy, during the last half century. It would be obviously impossible to enumerate here even their titles.

Of Bruno's works there is a fair Bibliography appended to Miss Frith's *Life*, pp. 310–377. Also a list of Bruno authorities.

beliefs, we could scarcely dignify them with the name of martyrs.

Miss Leycester. I am not so sure of that. Suppose *e.g.* they desired to test liberty of thought and speculation, they would then be martyrs of Free-thought. No one has a right to interdict beliefs, however absurd, if they are conscientiously held and do no harm to the rest of the community. I am by no means a believer in Spiritualism; but if I were, and in consequence were compelled to endure social penalties, I should consider myself a confessor.

Harrington. But a confessor for what? for Spiritualism, or for freedom of speculation? In your reply to Arundel you adroitly contrived to confuse the main motive of the martyrdom with incidental considerations not immediately pertaining to it. If a man is benighted enough to be ready to suffer for the sake of witchcraft, we cannot easily credit him with the enlightenment which could alone make Free-thought a preponderating motive for self-denial. But all the special pleading in the world cannot make the real cause for which a man suffers anything else but a matter of profound importance. We cannot for a moment dispute the immense disparity, as to the moral value of the act, between a man who dies fighting in a drunken brawl, and the patriot who falls in defending his country. The test is the worth of the deed—its ethical or other value to humanity—not the persuasion of the doer. The Hindoo widow when she mounts the pyre and sacrifices her life to her deceased husband, and Giordano Bruno when he goes manfully to the stake, are both animated by a principle of duty; though, judged *ab extra*, and by high social and moral standards, one is an act of debasing superstition, the other of noble heroism. As to the relative merits of martyrs of religion and those of Free-thought, they may, I think, be allocated in this way. All conscientious sufferers for what they believe to be truth, leaving out fools and fanatics, are in reality *e.g.* Christian martyrs. Those who take part in producing their sufferings, no matter what their creed, are veritable Antichrists. Thus Pope Clement VIII., with a few more of his Pontifical brethren, and Philip II., may be coupled with Nero

and Domitian; while those holy butchers Torquemada and Sanseverina have their true prototypes in the executioners of the early Christians—perhaps in the starved and raging beasts which devoured them in the Roman amphitheatre.

Miss Leycester. Romanism, if it were honest, ought to have two calendars of Confessors and Martyrs—a Creditor and a Debtor calendar—martyrs who suffered for Romanism, or for the spurious Christianity of which it is the development, and martyrs by Romanism. Perhaps it would not be prudent to ask which would be the longer; and a close comparison of the two might be invidious; but a list comprising such men as Paleario, Carnesecchi, Bruno, Galileo, Vico, Valdes, Campanella, Vanini, would require some strong names to match them.

Arundel. Cordially as we all detest religious tyranny and intolerance, we must, I think, confess there are precedents for it in nature. I was reading, the other day, of certain savages who, when a member of the tribe falls sick, gather about him and beat out his brains with their clubs. 'Behold,' I said to myself, 'a parallel to the fate of Bruno and Vanini.' Physical infirmities in the one case, and what are assumed to be mental diseases in the other, are both thought worthy of death, though it must be admitted the diagnosis of the latter is neither so easy nor certain as that of the former.

Trevor. A complimentary comparison, Arundel. The savages of the Fiji Islands (let us say) paralleled with supreme Pontiffs, Ecclesiastical Councils, and the Holy Office. But you might have penetrated still lower strata of the animal kingdom for precedents of that kind. Herds of wild animals will gather round a sick member and gore and trample it to death; while bees will destroy every individual of a whole brood when born with an imperfect organization. It is merely the operation of the sublime law—the survival of the fittest—effected in this instance by means of their own exertions in murdering the unfit. An application of this principle of survivals to dogmatic development would be interesting both as regards individuals and beliefs. Thus Arius must succumb while Athanasius triumphs. Nestorius must suffer while Cyril remains dominant. Savonarola is burnt while Borgia survives as

Pope. Bruno is martyred while Mocenigo and Sanseverina remain flourishing. Or, applying the principle to dogmas—the Copernican system is suppressed, that the historical truth of the 1st chapter of Genesis may be saved. The numberless worlds of Bruno are tabooed, in order that the veracious doctrines of purgatory, transubstantiation, the perpetual Virginity of Mary may flourish in their stead.

Miss Leycester. Well, we must not forget that doctrines or mental survivals, have the whole future in which to develop. With the leading thinkers of our own day the starry world of Bruno, *e.g.*, is a much more indisputable truth than transubstantiation. In order to justify our application of the law of 'the survival of the fittest' to dogmas, we ought to know what the 'survivals' of 500 years hence are destined to be.

Harrington. What is remarkable in Bruno's countless worlds is the rapidity with which he evolved them from the newer astronomy. He made the Copernican system the Pegasus of transcendental idealism. Never was there a more abrupt transition from physics to metaphysics. The fact of the earth being a planet, and the existence of innumerable suns and planetary systems, was the Jacob's ladder by which he scaled, or tried to scale, infinity. Hence Bruno is the father of all modern idealists and pantheists; beginning with Spinoza and ending with the latest development of Hegelianism.

Arundel. I confess it taxes my patience to observe how readily and ungratefully such idealists as a rule ignore the ordinary means and aids by which they have achieved their exalted position. They remind me of those unhappy wretches who having induced by opium smoking a condition of rapture, are inclined to regard their temporary exhilaration as if it were their normal state of existence, and ignore the material means of drug and pipe by which it was in reality produced; or men who, by the help of ladders, having scaled some lofty tower, immediately proceed to thrust down their means of ascent, and rejoicing in their elevation, regard it as their natural destiny, and proceed to affirm the non-existence of all ladders. The question to ask in such a case is: either ladders

exist, or how came you there? To the idealist the objection is fatal: your abstraction has been gained by means of concretes. The lowest rung of your metaphysical ladder is placed on *Terra Firma*. By no other means could you have attained your sublime and ethereal position.

TREVOR. Not so fatal as you suppose. The idealist might say, what Plato and many of his disciples did say, that his sublime *creations* as you would call them, were not in reality originated by themselves; but on the contrary were inborn or intuitive, all that their senses did being merely to call their attention to the fact. They might therefore plead that they knew nothing of concretes or of *Terra Firma* as starting points or conditions of knowledge. The inspired vision of the mystic is to him a much more infallible basis of conviction than his physical senses can be to the natural philosopher.

MISS LEYCESTER. I think you are really too hard on Idealists, Mr. Arundel. For my part I quite sympathize with Bruno and his abstractions; so far at least as I understand them. His 'Infinite' and 'One' I regard as a kind of intellectual crucible, or witches' cauldron, into which he threw all divisions, contradictions, mutations in time and space, whatever, in short, conflicted with his philosophical sense of all-completeness and inclusiveness; and in which, by the magic power of the fancy, they were transmuted and etherealized into the purest and most rarefied of all conceivable abstractions. In his case as in others, idealism is the imagination of philosophy, and it seems to me both arbitrary and unjust to exclude 'lovers of wisdom' any more than poets and painters from weaving the web of a brightly coloured fancy. I can imagine philosophers getting just as tired of the poverty, monotony and slavish restrictions imposed on them by their senses, by the inevitable conditions of terrestrial existence, or by ordinary human opinion, as poets are supposed to be by their humble and prosaic surroundings. Why should not the philosopher in the words of Keats—

> '. . . Let the winged Fancy wander
> Though the thought still spread beyond her.'

TREVOR (with enthusiasm). Well said, Miss Leycester.

'Oh, sweet Fancy, let her loose,
Phenomena are spoilt by use.
Where's the sense that doth not fade,
Too much questioned? Where's the . . .'
(pauses suddenly.)

HARRINGTON (laughing). Go on, Doctor. You are leaving your adaptation at its most interesting point. I am anxious to hear what philosophical turn you can give to Keats' next enquiry.

TREVOR. The trochaics of Keats do not easily accommodate themselves to philosophy. Poetry, as you know, came into the field of language before philosophy, and appropriated all the simple and easy terms to her own use, leaving to her learned successor nothing but the dry stubble of the harvest.

ARUNDEL. True, Doctor; but please to remember that philosophy has made amends for her tardiness by taking measures to secure a private linguistic harvest of her own; though, judging by the crop, I should not augur favourably of the seed.

MRS. HARRINGTON. This comes of discussing a poet-philosopher like Bruno. You are all in danger of being carried away on the wings of imagination and similitude. In order to bring you down once more to the *Terra Firma*, which Mr. Arundel says is the starting-point of all idealism, allow me to ask what are the best authorities for Bruno's life. Charles gave Florence and myself a French work by M. Bartholmèss to get up the subject; telling us that it was good for the man and his character, but valueless for the events and dates of his life.

TREVOR. I would not go so far as to say that Bartholmèss is valueless for the events of Bruno's life; though no doubt his dates are incorrect. The main incidents of Bruno's life have long been the common property of all his biographers who have studied his extant works, in which they are occasionally mentioned. Bartholmèss's merit is to have done this with a fulness and exactitude which have been excelled by no writer on the subject. His work has also other claims on every student of Bruno. He writes in a tender sympathetic manner

of the poor martyr-philosopher, and yet does not allow commiseration for his fate to warp his critical estimate of his teachings. He also possesses an enormous command of the literature—German, Italian, Spanish and English, as well as his native French—needed to elucidate the subject. That, in point of chronological correctness his work is inferior to that of Professor Berti, is not his own fault. The latter was fortunate enough to discover a quantity of documents, originally belonging to the Archives of Venice, and which contain the various interrogatories to which Bruno was subjected before he was delivered by the authorities at Venice to the Inquisition at Rome. The most important discovery revealed by these precious records is the duration of Bruno's imprisonment, which all his biographers had previously thought lasted for about two years, but which were really protracted for a period of eight years. If we could only obtain access to all the records of the Holy Office at Rome, we should probably find other important documents, as well as several of Bruno's lost works. But that is "a find" which I fear the history of modern philosophy is not destined to realize for some time. The Inquisition, like every vulgar murderer, is fully alive to the expediency of destroying or suppressing so far as possible, all records or mementoes by which its nefarious deeds might be brought to fuller light. To the discovery of the Venetian papers we must ascribe the suggestion of Professor Berti's work; for he himself tells us that he would never have undertaken a task so well performed by Bartholmèss, had it not been for the large fund of fresh information, including what might be called an autobiography of Bruno, which those documents disclosed. Perhaps I ought, in enumerating original authorities, to add the name of Schioppius. This man was a pervert from Protestantism; and like all perverts, a zealous enthusiast on behalf of his adopted faith. His testimony is of some importance in the case of Bruno; for he was an eye-witness of his death. On the evening of the 17th of February, 1600, and not many hours after Bruno's ashes had been scattered to the winds, Schioppius wrote a full account of the event to Conrad Rittershausen, a German friend. The letter

is valuable for several reasons, as we shall find when we come to the last melancholy page of Bruno's life.

Miss Leycester. Melancholy, in one sense no doubt; but gloriously triumphant in another. Bruno, like Campanella and Vanini, seems to have foreseen the stake and the faggot as the probable, and even fitting, consummation of a life-long struggle against dogmatic intolerance and oppression. What to outsiders might well have appeared a lurid and terrible flame of punishment, those heroic spirits regarded but as the candle which lit them to bed. They manifest not only a contempt for torture, but even a kind of greediness of it such as we read of in early Christian martyrology. In the enthusiasm of liberty they are like people intoxicated with an overmastering passion, entirely insensible to bodily pain. I wonder, by the way, if this stern, earnestly thoughtful, intellectual face, prefixed to Bartholmèss's Life and Wagner's Works, was really Bruno's: if so, one might easily comprehend his life, if not, in the sixteenth century, predict his death.

Trevor. I am sorry to say that the traditional portrait (of which you may see three different impressions in these books on the table) is not well authenticated. Professor Berti distrusts it, though all his researches have hitherto failed in discovering a more genuine likeness. He gives this description of Bruno: 'short in stature, agile in frame, of meagre body, a thin and pallid face, thoughtful expression; a glance both piercing and melancholy; hair and beard between black and chestnut; a ready, rapid, imaginative tongue, accompanied by vivacious gestures, a manner courteous and gentle. Sociable, amiable and pleasant in conversation, like the Italians of the south; adapting himself without difficulty to the tastes, usages and habits of another; open and candid, both with friends and foes, and as far from rancour, and revenge, as he was quickly moved to anger.'[1] The Professor adds in a note that this description does not fully harmonize with the traditional portrait. I am inclined to differ from him on this point. Allowing a few years further thought and development to

[1] Berti, *Vita di Giordano Bruno*, p. 296.

have passed over his head, deepening somewhat the lines in his face (for the portrait is evidently that of a young man), and adding the dark-brown beard of his later years, we shall have a very adequate representation of the lineaments and character Professor Berti has given us.

HARRINGTON. But on what authority does this traditional portrait rest?

TREVOR. So far as I have been able to trace it, I find it first in Rixner and Siber's volume on Giordano Bruno, which forms part of their interesting collection: *Leben und Lehrmeinungen berühmter Physiker am Ende des XVI. und am Anfange des XVII. Jahrhunderts.* This was published in 1824, and the authors tell us that they took the portrait from the 'interesting collection of Herr Wirthmann in Munich.'[1] The form of the likeness was small 8vo, and the name of the engraver was erased. They add that it probably was once a title plate to one of Bruno's works. We shall find that Bruno enjoyed considerable celebrity for some years both in Paris and London, which would make his portrait a matter of public interest. Some day, perhaps, the original engraving and date may be discovered.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I have been trying to make out what dress Bruno is represented in, but have quite failed.

TREVOR. That is the white cowl or hood of the Dominican order, a garment like the domino still worn in masquerades. At that time it was common both to laymen and clerics, whence the proverb 'the hood does not make the monk.'[2]

MISS LEYCESTER. The more I gaze upon his noble but somewhat sad and stern face,[3] the more reason do I find for regarding it as an authentic likeness of Bruno. At least I should never give up this portrait, which I have long admired,

[1] *Rixner und Siber*, Heft. v. p. iv.

[2] Comp. *Rixner und Siber*, loc. cit., p. iv.

[3] Mr. Maurice, in his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (Modern Part, p. 165), ascribes to his physical beauty some of the enormous influence which Bruno wielded. 'Grace and beauty of every kind speak to his soul, and exercise a dominion over him which one would fear must have often been too much for his judgment, and his loftier aspirations. His countenance testifies how mightily he must have been attracted, and how many he must have attracted.'

for any other even though better authenticated, if the latter did not convey with equal distinctness my ideal of the man. Among my many notions which Charles there is pleased to call paradoxical, I entertain a strong feeling that the highest kind of portraiture is that which gives the man's mind, his intellect, his spiritual character; unless the facial lineaments clearly and fully indicate this, I think their precise configuration a matter of secondary importance. A portrait should be a likeness of a man's soul, not merely of his body, as Napoleon once remarked to the painter David, 'No one cares whether the likeness of a great man resembles him or not, if only his spirit lives in it.' Hence all portrait-painters ought to have the fullest and most intimate acquaintance with their subject's mental characteristics, as well as the art of transferring *mind* to canvass or paper. Of course every genuine artist should be both a philosopher and an idealist. . . . I do not know a more painful disappointment than that which one feels when, after ideally constructing a likeness of some one of the world's greatest minds, we are shown as its authentic physical counterpart an ordinary expressionless face which perhaps does not suggest a single one of the attributes with which we have mentally invested it. I have never yet seen a single portrait of Shakespeare which at all conveys my notion of him.

ARUNDEL. But suppose, Miss Leycester, that the subject of the portrait has no superior mental characteristics to boast of; you would not, I presume, interdict the representation of homely features conjoined to qualities which, though just as ordinary, may to acquaintances and intimate associates be of sterling worth? Moreover Nature, in the manifold products of her laboratory, displays a capricious disregard of idealist notions and wishes. How often *e.g.* do the features of a man of genius suggest rather a commonplace character; and on the other hand striking features are sometimes found allied with an ordinary or even inferior type of character. I know a remarkable instance in a clergyman of high social, but inferior intellectual status, who possesses all the external attributes of genius, but apparently none of its real properties. As a

mutual friend says of him, he always looks as if he were on the point of saying or doing something wonderful, but—it never comes.

Miss Leycester. Of course if a man has no great or striking mental characteristics, and possesses no public but merely domestic virtues, he has no business to have his portrait published to the world. The world has no more concern with his face than it has with the quality of his clothes or the price of the tea he drinks. As to the statement that intellectual features are often found in combination with a commonplace character, I am not at all inclined to admit it. Men of real mental power cannot help betraying the fact in their physiogonomy. Such at least is my experience, judging from living men.

Harrington. To an idealist nothing is impossible. Take this portrait of Bruno for instance. The chief characteristics it suggests to me are audacity and determination. It is a vivid impersonation of the quality indicated by his favourite maxim—

'Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito.'

If his features were not so refined I could imagine him a leader of Communists or Socialists. The face is that of a man at war with the convictions, laws, or social usages of the world. Hence your ideal portrait-painting, Florence, must needs be an art confined to yourself; no one can possibly share in it. Your picture-gallery of the great minds of the world is solely and absolutely yours; and as such it is beyond both discussion and criticism. You conceive the lineaments; you define, if definition can be used of such a process, the expressions; you shape, contour, and no doubt modify them after your fancy; you make the finished product—when it is finished, for idealists who do not stereotype their creations on canvas or paper are perpetually remoulding, and recolouring their productions—the representation of what you conceive to be striking qualities. But such a portrait, if made perceptible to others, might be far from resembling not only the particular individual it purported to depict, but every other man that ever lived. The *reductio ad absurdum* of your art would be

achieved when you joined together a number of attributes and requested a painter to embody them in an ideal impersonation. Take Shakespeare, for instance, whose likeness you say you have never yet seen. You might give your enumeration of the qualities which you think compose his myriad-mindedness, to some great painter, and say, Paint me a vivid and life-like embodiment of all these varied attributes.

Miss Leycester. A proceeding of which I should take care not to be guilty, even if I could find a competent artist who would be willing to engage in such a task. I should fear the almost inevitable discrepancy between his creation and my own. As to such a commission being a *reductio ad absurdum* of idealism, my conceptions are formed in precisely the same way as all ideas are engendered, *viz.* by the plastic power of intellect or imagination. Every mind worthy of the name is an ideal picture gallery, the slow and sometimes expensive accumulation of much time and labour, possibly containing like all such collections, some few good pictures, together with a large proportion of rubbish; but all so far valuable and unique that they bear the indelible impress of one's own individuality. The main difference between myself and other people is that they are ready to exchange at a moment's notice their idealizations, no matter how carefully constructed, for any realization submitted to them with some pretext of authority. Tell them, *e.g.* this is an undoubtedly authentic likeness of Shakspeare, or Bruno, or Augustine, or any other of the world's worthies, and they immediately hasten to remove their own mental creation, perhaps the most valuable in their whole gallery, in order to make room for the new comer. Now this sacrifice of mind to matter, of faith to sight, I am only willing to make when the visible picture is, as is this traditional Bruno-likeness, the best conceivable rendering of my conception of the man's spiritual qualities. An ideal truth, or what appears such to you, is greatly preferable to an actuality which you are not only unable to approve, but which is directly opposed to your most cherished convictions. My experience has long taught me that artistic realism frequently serves the confiding idealist the trick of 'old lamps for

new. For myself I know the wonderful virtues of the 'old lamp,' and I decline to make the exchange.

MRS. HARRINGTON. We are, I think, wandering somewhat rom Bruno. Among other qualities, his portrait suggests to me the idea of a man fated to die a martyr's death, as Lavater is said to have remarked of Vandyke's likeness of Charles I. After all, the crown and halo of martyrdom are not the unmeaning insignia which some people suppose. Who would not rather have been Bruno, even with that hour of excruciating agony, than his judges and executioners, destined to the eternal execration of all tolerant and Christ-like minds.

HARRINGTON. Natural as may be our feelings of anger and disgust at such inhuman and intolerant proceedings as the martyrdom of Bruno, they ought not, I think, to be totally devoid of pity for the poor misguided wretches who could so far misinterpret the spirit and life of Christianity. To expend unconditional, or perpetual, hatred on deeds motived by profound ignorance, and a perverted conception of duty, seems to me unjust. A court of the Inquisition, sentencing a heretic to torture and death, I place in the same category with a secular court of the same period gravely deliberating on the characteristics of witchcraft, and committing perhaps some tender and delicate woman, like La Esmeralda of Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, to the rack, and the stake or gibbet. I at least strive, though not always successfully, to share the mournful calm with which a similar mockery of justice and humanity is contemplated by Christ. 'The days will come when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service, but these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me.'

Trevor then began his paper:—

* * * * * *

In the century that elapsed between Pomponazzi and Bruno, momentous changes were taking place in the mental history of Italy. Partly these were continuations of the intellectual movements we have examined on former occasions, partly the result of fresh motive forces. As to the first, the general progress of the Renaissance, which we saw in full flow during the former epoch, may be said to have reached, for the time, its greatest height; and in Italy to betray some symptoms of

retreating. But in other countries—France, Germany, England—the tidal wave is still acquiring greater volume and momentum, besides imparting a reciprocal reflex agitation to the impulse which first put it in motion; just as the wave circlets, when a stone is thrown into a pond, reach the shore, and then run back to their primal centre of motion. The opposition to Aristotle and scholasticism, of which we have seen traces in Ockam, Petrarca and Pomponazzi, continues to be asserted by the free spirits of France and Italy as an essential prerequisite of philosophic freedom. The German Reformation, though its leaders are now disappearing from the scene, is still further extending its influence. It is the fortune of Bruno to come in successive contact with the three chief types of sixteenth-century Protestantism.[1] As Englishmen, we have no cause for self-congratulation in his experience that Wittenberg was more favourable than Oxford to freedom of thought; and, as Protestants, we may admit that its various systems, and the characters it sometimes evolved, gave too much room for Bruno's nicknaming Reformers, Deformers. One effect of this increasing development of Free-thought, both religious and secular, was to add a new source of suspicion and terror to the hierarchy of the Romish Church. Proscription and persecution took the place of the half contemptuous, half sympathetic toleration of Free-thought, which marked the leaders of the Church in the preceding century. The enthusiasm with which classical Revivalism was first received by liberal and enlightened Romanists, died away, as its effects on the creed and polity of the Church began to be more fully developed and appreciated. The formation of the Jesuits and other religious bodies, designed to counteract the floods of heresy and Free-thought which were spreading over Europe, and to institute a new and more vigorous propaganda than Romanism had ever yet attempted, was a proof that a reaction against liberal culture had set in and added a new element of danger to Free-thinkers. Our subject presents us with one victim of this ecclesiastical alarm and intolerance; and we shall shortly have another before us, in Vanini.

The growth of the sympathy with and affection for Nature, the commencement of which we have already noticed, is another prominent feature of the period we are about to consider. This is only another mode of affirming the continued development of the Naturalism we have already noticed; and which was partly the cause, partly the effect, of the decline of ecclesiastical influence which constituted the chief feature of the Italian Renaissance. But in the fifteenth century this Naturalism assumes a broader and more multiform character.

[1] *I.e.* Calvinism at Geneva, Lutheranism at Wittenberg, and Anglicanism at Oxford and London.

Nature is not now regarded, as it was by Petrarca and succeeding poets, from a merely æsthetic point of view as an object of wonder and admiration—a fitting subject for picturesque word-painting and tender, graceful poetry; nor only as by Boccaccio and other Free-thinkers, as a standard for human conduct—a plea for genuine liberty to be substituted for the depraved morals and excessive licence of the Church; nor again was it contemplated only from a theological point of view, whether as represented by the pantheism of Nicolas of Cusa and others, or by the natural theology of Raymund of Sabiende, or by the theosophy and magic of such men as Telesius and Cardan. Thinkers were now coming to regard Nature not as a divinity, to be distantly contemplated and reverently worshipped, but as an object of investigation and research—not as a verbal abstraction, but as an assemblage of numerous allied concretes, each inviting, to a certain extent, experiment and analysis. In other words, Nature hitherto conjoined with poetry, theology, theosophy and magic, is now becoming allied with experimental science. It is this alliance, recognized almost simultaneously by leading thinkers in France, Germany and England, as well as in Italy, that I have termed the newer motive force by which Bruno was stirred.[1] The earliest experimental science in Italy was the legitimate new birth of the bastard science Astrology. Our subject was among the first who comprehended the enormous import, not only for science, but for theology, of the Copernican system. It is not too much to say that it completely inverted the relative positions hitherto maintained of earth and heaven. All former systems had declared the earth to be the centre of the universe, not only in astronomy, but in philosophy and theology as well. Now the earth was reduced to a secondary and tributary position. The degradation could hardly have been pleasing to those who had arrogated to themselves excessive earthly dominion; and who had affirmed the supposed centre of the universe to contain central and universal beliefs for every portion of its unbounded circumference. The statesmen and functionaries of a power suddenly reduced from absolute supremacy to subjection, must of course share the degradation of their state; and the fates of Bruno, Galileo and Campanella, not to mention numerous predecessors and successors, attest the fearful vengeance which such officials would be prepared to exact from the authors of a change so ruinous to themselves.

Such was the intellectual environment into which Giordano Bruno was born. We shall find that his imagination, and many-sided intellectual sympathies reflect every phase of the great mental movements of his time; excepting the superstitious reverence for antiquity which

[1] Cf. Libri, *Histoire des Sciences Mathematiques in Italie*, vol. iv. p. 28, etc.

still characterized some Italian humanists. The pantheistic teachings of Avicenna and Cardinal de Cusa—the skeptical teaching of the latter, and generally of all the leading spirits of the Italian Renaissance—the hostility to Aristotelianism and scholasticism of Petrarca—the varied study of Nature initiated by different schools of prior speculation—the mystical superstition of Raymund Lulli—all find a place and an eager response in the large intellect and fervid imagination of Bruno. Hence few thinkers can be named whose works and speculations cover so large a chronological area. On the one hand, his thoughts stretch themselves into the darkness of the middle ages; on the other hand, they embrace some of the latest phases of German transcendentalism. No other fifteenth-century thinker has sown a harvest which is not all housed even in our day; and the abundant gleanings of which will no doubt occupy kindred spirits for centuries to come.

Bruno was born at Nola in 1548 or 1550; of noble lineage, say both Bartholmèss and Berti; of poor parents, rejoin other biographers.[1] The former is, I think, the more probable, though the matter is of no great consequence; and it is not the only point in Bruno's life which we must leave in uncertainty. The house in which he was brought up was situate at the foot of Mount Cicala,[2] noted for its wine, its fertility and genial climate. There he was probably also born; but that we have no means of ascertaining. His father's name was Giovanni, and his profession a soldier; his mother's name was Fraulissa Savolina. His own baptismal name was Filippo, which he changed into Giordano when he assumed a religious habit.[3] The natural environment of the young child curiously corresponds with his disposition and his destiny in after life. Bartholmèss indeed applies the maxim of Tasso,—

> 'La Terra . . .
> Simili a sè gli abitator, produce,'.

to all the inhabitants of the district round Nola and Naples. 'The soil of Nola,' he says, 'is volcanic, as is its atmosphere, its water, its black and thick wine, which has the significant name of Mangia guerra' (the Fire-eater).[4] However true this may be of the general population of Naples, it certainly is true of more than one eminent name connected with the district. In different degrees it is true of Vanini, Valdez, Telesius, Campanella and Ochino, but truest of all of Giordano Bruno.[5] His excitable disposition, fervid imagination, un-

[1] Berti, p. 36, note 2.
[2] Op. Ital., ii. p. 152; Berti, *Vita*, p. 37.
[3] Berti, *Vita*, p. 35.
[4] Bartholmèss, i. p. 26.
[5] Cf. Berti, *Vita*, p. 41, who says that in Nola, of all the cities of Magna Græcia, the culture and general refining influences of the Greek-Latin civiliza-

tiring restlessness, may well be called volcanic; while his works, poured forth under the influence of intense feeling, and carrying destruction to much of the assumed learning, and settled convictions of the time, may be likened to so many streams of lava.

Of his youth we know scarce anything reliable; nothing more, in fact, than the occasional retrospect which he furnishes in later works, especially in the Venetian documents published by Berti. Two prominent characteristics marked it. (1) A strong feeling for Nature, and an imaginative interpretation of her facts and processes. (2) A skeptical distrust of his senses; and probably of some of the beliefs which were sought to be impressed on his youthful intellect. With these germs of Free-thought was combined, somewhat later, a dread of, and contempt for, political tyranny and ambition, and an unquenchable thirst for freedom—the natural product of the scenes of cruelty and oppression which marked the government of Naples in those days.[1]

Where Bruno acquired his early education we are not told. Probably in the school of some convent, either in Nola or in the immediate neighbourhood; but at the age of ten or eleven years, having perhaps exhausted these educational resources, he departed for Naples to complete his education in logic and humane letters.

As the next step in his career, we hear of his entering the convent of St. Domenico Maggiore in Naples.[2] The motives which induced him to take this step are not easy to ascertain. The only openings for ambitious young men in the Naples of the sixteenth century were the army, the law, and the Church. Bruno's preference for the last may have been dictated by his love of learned leisure and contemplation.[3] This was no doubt the motive which actuated so many of the thinkers of that period to join one or other of the monastic orders. Telesius *e.g.* early retired into a convent of Benedictines; and Campanella, his more famous pupil, became a member of the Dominican

tion were most powerful. What is more remarkable, on the common theory which makes Bruno the father of modern Idealism, is that its birthplace was so near the native home of Greek Idealism—the far-famed Elea which gave to Greek philosophy Xenophanes, Parmenides and Zeno. This local connexion with some of the greatest thinkers of antiquity was duly prized by Bruno, who frequently dwells with complacency on the similarity of his speculations to those of the Eleatics (Comp. Bartholmèss, ii. p. 310). See also a work on this very subject that has recently appeared, *Dell' Essere e del Conoscere, studî su Parmenide Platone e Rosmini di Giuseppi Buroni.* Torino 1878.

[1] On the state of Naples in Bruno's youthful days, compare Bartholmèss, i. p. 27, etc.

[2] This is still one of the most remarkable religious houses in Naples. See Prof. Berti's description, p. 48.

[3] *Eroici Furori*, op. Ital., Ed. Wagner, ii. p. 313.

order. Besides, Bruno's instructors from his earliest years had been the monks; and it is not wonderful if they imbued his young mind with a liking for their own profession. Professor Berti supposes that the fame and influence of Aquinas in Naples may also have contributed somewhat to his decision, as it did to the similar resolve of Campanella.[1] Not the least remarkable feature in Bruno's conduct, so far as we are now able to judge it, is his choice of the Dominican order as his own; for, as Bartholmèss reminds us, this order, together with the Augustins, was particularly commissioned to use its utmost efforts to extinguish the new lights of Protestantism and Free-thought. The irony of human destiny certainly seems to have presided at the admission of the freest thinker of the thirteenth century into the ranks of the Obscurants (obscuri viri). Bruno's cloistral existence has received important elucidations from the Venetian documents. It comprehended altogether a period of thirteen years. The date of his full orders as priest is given as 1572.[2] But, previous to his taking this final step, Bruno's intellect had begun to display those qualities which made him one of the greatest philosophers of the Italian Renaissance; or rather the restlessness, independence of thought and vigorous imagination, which marked even his childhood, began to assert themselves with increasing vigour and persistency. All his biographers are agreed, and it is itself transparently obvious, that Bruno was utterly unsuited for a monastic life. The first and chief quality of the monk is submission; and intellectual submission was a duty which Bruno was utterly incapable of understanding, and therefore quite incompetent to render. During the thirteen years of his cloister life no less than two processes were issued against him for open and avowed heresy—for his was not the mutely secretive nature which could meditate and doubt in silence. We see therefore that his education, though conducted by Dominicans, was by no means a passive and obsequious receptivity. He might have said of his training in the words of an English poet, to whom he bears no small degree of similarity, I mean Shelley:—

> '. . . From that hour did I with earnest thought
> Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,

[1] Campanella, *De propriis Libris*, Art. I.

[2] Berti, *Vita*, p. 50, who gives the chronology of Bruno's cloister life as follows:—

1563, Assumes the religious dress.
1564, Profession.
1569, Sub-deacon.
1570, Deacon.
1572, Priest.

> Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
> I cared to learn, but from that secret store
> Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
> It might walk forth to war among mankind.'[1]

The dogmas against which Bruno's youthful but precocious intellect first stumbled were those of the Trinity, Transubstantiation and the Immaculate Conception. These would seem to have come into direct conflict with the opinions he had already formed as to the unvarying law and order of all natural processes, as well as with the spiritual idealistic character of his general mode of thought. Other and extraneous causes also conspired to force these subjects on Bruno's attention. The kingdom of Naples in the sixteenth century was famous for its Anti-trinitarianism. It was the home of Socinus, Ochino, Vermigli, and other Protestants of a more or less Free-thinking type. The different modes of interpreting the doctrine formed, we are told, a favourite topic of conversation in Neapolitan convents and monasteries. In the spacious garden walks and secluded arbours of the convent of St. Domenico Maggiore the subject was no doubt frequently debated by Bruno and his brother monks. Throughout his life he was passionately fond of controversy; and was accustomed to put forth his views freely and without reserve. The persuasion that truth must be the outcome of all full and impartial discussion was as deeply engrained in his mind as in that of Milton.[2] The freedom of his Trinitarian speculations, and what to the hyper-sensitive ears of his brethren sounded like an indirect defence of Arianism, subjected him to the charge of heresy. Whatever may have been Bruno's exact views on the subject at this early period of his life, both his own confession and the direction of his subsequent intellectual development combine to assure us that they were considerably removed from the narrow path of orthodoxy. He refused to allow in God any other distinction but the rational or logical one of His own attributes. In the person of the Son he recognized the intellect of the Father, and in that of the Holy Ghost, the Father's Love, or the Soul of the universe. As he held that the Divinity by its infinite nature could not be joined

[1] *Revolt of Islam*, Dedic. v.

[2] 'Egli,' says Prof. Berti of Bruno, 'è pieno di fede nel trionfo della verita, nonostante la guerra accanita che a lei muovono i genii maligni, nonostante che egli sia lasciato solo sulla breccia a pugnare.'—*Vita*, p. 200. The English reader need hardly be reminded of the noble confidence in the inherent sovereignty of truth which marks Milton's *Areopagitica*. 'Though all the winds of Doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously . . . to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple, who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?' —*Areopagitica*, Prose Works, Bohn's Ed., ii. p. 96.

with the finite nature of humanity, his speculations on the Trinity induced him to deny the doctrine of the Incarnation,[1] at least in the grossly materialistic sense in which it had been affirmed by the mediæval Church. The name of Person he declared inapplicable both to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; and he further based his rejection of it on St. Augustine, who admitted that the term was not ancient, but novel and of his own time.[2] Such were the thoughts and speculations of the young idealist on the most profound of all mysteries. Whatever their intrinsic value or demerit, we must acknowledge their complete congruity with the theories and conclusions of his later life.

The first process to which Bruno was subjected occurred during his Noviciate, and was undertaken by the master of the Novices. His second process befell him after he was in full orders, and was instigated by the Father Provincial.[3] The former transgression might have been regarded by the authorities as an ebullition of youthful waywardness. The latter was more serious, as the lapse of a heretic, already once arraigned if not convicted. The inculpated opinions, moreover, affected dogmas which, though not found in the actual teaching of Christ, the Church had long declared to be of supreme importance. Bruno recognized the danger. He departed secretly from his beloved Naples, never more to see it; and took the road to Rome, where he arrived in 1576. But he was not allowed to escape thus easily. His superiors, with the keen dogmatic apprehension of bigots, which is often in exactly inverse ratio to their dull intellectual comprehension, had clearly discovered Bruno's abilities. Even had they not ascertained the weakness of some of the links in his chain of dogmas, his originality and independence of mind would have sufficed to stamp him as 'dangerous.' Accordingly, Bruno had not been long at Rome before he learnt that the process he had left behind was soon

[1] Berti, *Vita*, p. 56.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 56, note 2. The passage to which Bruno referred is probably from Book vii. of the *De Trinitate*. 'Hoc utcumque simile est quia et veteres qui latine locuti sunt, antequam haberent ista nomina (scilicet personarum vel substantiarum), quæ non diu est ut in usum venerunt, pro his naturam dicebant.'—August., Op. om., Par. 1694, vol. ii. p. 852.

[3] The ostensible causes of these processes are described by Bruno in words which strikingly exemplify the atmosphere of suspicion and repression which pervaded a mediæval convent: 'A Napoli era stato processato duo volte, prima per haver dato via certe figure e imagini de Santi, e ritenuto un crucefisso solo, essendo per questo imputato de sprezzar le imagini de Santi, e anco per haver detto a un novitio che leggeva la historia delle sette alegrezze in versi, che cosa voleva far di quel libro, che lo gettasse via, e leggesse piu presto qualche altro libro, come è la vita de Santi Padri.'—Documenti, vii., Berti, *Vita*, etc., pp. 341–2.

to follow him. Indeed, his case had assumed a worse aspect since he left Naples; for among the personal effects he abandoned in his hurried flight, his enemies discovered certain books of Jerome and Chrysostom which had been prohibited, as annotated by the heretic Erasmus.[1] This secret intelligence alarmed Bruno, who took an early opportunity of quitting Rome, having first divested himself of his friar's habit, and again assumed his baptismal name of Philip. Professor Berti thinks that his flight may have been accelerated by witnessing the abjuration of Carranza,[2] Archbishop of Toledo, and of Bruno's own order of Dominicans, who had ventured to protest against the worship of images and other doctrines of Romanism, as human inventions. However this may be, Bruno directed his steps to Genoa. Here he established a school for boys; and also commenced private readings with a few adult pupils of the better class, on the Sphere, *i.e.* Celestial Geography. He also wrote a treatise on that subject which is now lost, as well as another work also lost, which seems to have borne some resemblance in style and subject to his later Dialogues. This production was called *Noah's Ark*.[3] It was probably during this period that Bruno pursued those studies of the Copernican astronomy which he afterwards incorporated into his system. He did not remain long in Genoa: some unknown reason, perhaps the unsatisfactory nature of his surroundings, or his own inborn restlessness, impelled him to recommence his wanderings. He repaired first to the small sea-port Savona; and from thence to Turin. There his arrival chanced to be about the same time that Tasso paid his memorable visit to that town, 'a broken down and prematurely aged man, sorrow in his heart, disease in his limbs, and rags on his back, and was imprisoned by the Turin authorities on suspicion of being infected with the plague.' Professor Berti has a brief contrast of the different dispositions and destinies of the two men, Tasso a Christian and poet of the Cross, Bruno opposed to every religious symbol. The former, wearied and disillusionized with the world, ends his days in the retirement of a convent. The latter, starting from a convent, dies on the scaffold, with eyes averted from the crucifix.

[1] Comp. Berti, *Vita*, p. 56, note 2.

[2] For some account of this confessor to Protestantism, see Berti, *Vita*, p. 57, note 2. Fuller information may be found in De Castro, *Historia de los Protestants Espagnoles*, pp. 192–242; Cesare Cantu, *Gli Eretici d' Italia*, ii. p. 324, etc.; Llorente, *Histoire de l'Inquisition*, iii. 183–315.

[3] Professor Berti thinks that this work, *L'arca di Noè*, which was dedicated to Pope Pius V., consisted of a symbolical representation of human society by means of the animals collected in the ark. It is easy to see what scope such a subject afforded for Bruno's imagination, as well as for his humour and sarcasm.

Bruno tells us that he did not find Turin to his satisfaction. He therefore left it and came to Venice. Here he wrote another work, *The Signs of the Times*, which he submitted before publication to a learned and pious Dominican who enjoyed high esteem in Venice. As the work met with his approval, there was probably nothing in it very startling or contrary to the received tenets of Romanism. This work is not alluded to in Bruno's subsequent writings. After a stay of two months he left Venice and came to Padua. Here he fell in with certain former acquaintances of his own order, who urged on him the expediency of again adopting the Dominican habit without re-entering the order. This appears to have been no uncommon custom in those days, when we are told that in Italy were some 40,000 monks who lived outside their convents. Bruno did not follow the advice then; but he did so shortly after, as we shall learn. From Padua he journeyed to Brescia, where a curious event befel him. A certain monk had suddenly and unexpectedly become a prophet, a great theologian, and skilful in languages. His companions, ascribing such unwonted erudition to diabolical influences, shut the poor man in prison. Bruno relates, sarcastically, that he cured the man of his acute attack of learning, and restored him to his former asinine condition, by means of a draught which purged his melancholic humours. During a short visit to Bergamo, Bruno again adopted the Dominican habit, and wore on it his scapular, which he had carefully preserved. The incident is worth a passing notice as a proof, which may be extended to his after life, that he had no wish, and saw no necessity to openly sever himself from his religious order. Bruno's next remove was to Milan, where he probably made the acquaintance of Sir Philip Sidney, whom he afterwards knew under brighter auspices in England. From Milan he once more returned to Turin; and from thence he crossed the Alps and came to Chambery. His first plan was to pursue his road to Lyons; but hearing an indifferent account of French convents, he altered his mind, and arrived at Geneva in the year 1576.

'The tracks of many proscribed teachers,' says Bartholmèss, 'led Bruno to Geneva.' No doubt the Swiss state had afforded a welcome sanctuary to independent thinkers. As such it was a 'colluvies hæreticorum' to the Romanist, and the Canaan of Protestants. But the genuine sympathies of Geneva were, as Bruno soon experienced, as narrowly exclusive in one direction as those of extreme Romanism in another. Bartholmèss says,[1] 'The two Churches were governed by the same principle of jurisdiction—the criminality of heresies.

[1] Vol. i. p. 59.

Whoever believed wrongly, that is to say, otherwise than the Holy Office or the Venerable Consistory, believed nothing; and he who believed not, committed the crime of treason to God, and deserved capital punishment. Persecution hence became a sacred duty, an act agreeable to God. The greater its intolerance the greater its value.' We shall presently see, in the case of Ramus, something of this intolerance on the part of Theodore Beza. Indeed, that great reformer was convinced that the toleration of alien, *i.e.* un-German opinions was nothing less than a devilish dogma (diabolicum dogma). A Church administered on these principles was not likely to prove a haven of rest to our unquiet and free-spirited philosopher. It seems probable that Bruno had for some reason misapprehended the nature of Genevan freedom; for according to his own statement his chief motive in coming thither was a wish 'to live quietly and securely.' Such was his answer to a famous Neapolitan refugee of high standing in Geneva (Caracciolo Marquis of Vico [1]), who sought him a few days after his arrival, for the purpose of ascertaining his religious opinions, and his reasons for coming to the head quarters of Calvinism. The measure of religious liberty he was likely to enjoy there was foreshadowed in this interview, which must have opened his eyes to the fact that the Inquisition of the Holy Office was not the only court of the kind in Christendom. The propriety of becoming a disciple of John Calvin was immediately urged on him. On Bruno's excusing himself, the suggestion was proffered that he had better put off his Dominican habit and dress like a layman. This he was enabled to do by the efforts of a few Italian refugees, who clubbed together to procure him a suit of clothes, with a sword, etc. For the space of two and a half months Bruno obtained a precarious livelihood by correcting for the press, living all the while quite aloof from the narrow and bigoted society

[1] Galeazzo Caracciolo was one of the most remarkable converts to Calvinism in the sixteenth century. The only son of one of the noblest families in Naples, the nephew of a Pope (Paul IV.), the darling child of his father, who cherished on his behalf the most ambitious views, the husband of a noble and wealthy lady. The father of six children, Chamberlain at the Court of Naples, Cavalier of the Empire, in which his father held a distinguished position, the idol of his many and influential friends, he forsook all his honours and emoluments, abandoned his parents, wife and children, all of whom he tenderly loved, surrendered his brilliant prospects, and fled to Geneva and Calvin in in 1551, being at the time only thirty-five years of age. Few biographies of the period are more interesting; and few it may be added exhibit more painfully the mischievous effects of a perverted view of religious duty. Cf. Berti, p. 98, note 2. C. Cantu, *Gli Eretici d' Italia*, ii. p. 11. Herzog, *Real Encyklopädie*, vol. ii., voce *Caraccioli*.

of Geneva. At the end of that period, finding the alternative of starvation or an open profession of Calvinism staring him in the face, he took his leave, quietly, and started for Lyons. Such was the first of several experiences of Protestant liberty which induced him to regard the Reformation as a deformation. At Lyons Bruno stayed only ten or twelve days. He next turned his steps to Toulouse. Professor Berti supposes that Bruno might here have come in contact with Sanchez, who settled in Toulouse, according to my calculations, in the very year of Bruno's arrival thither. Neither of the two skeptics seem to have mentioned the other; though they had not a few opinions in common as well as a large fund of general sympathy for intellectual and spiritual freedom. Here Bruno applied for the place of Ordinary Reader of Philosophy in the university. But in order to obtain it he was compelled to undergo an examination for a Doctor's degree. He did so; and, vanquishing his competitors received the appointment; thus becoming by dint of superior abilities and erudition a professor in the second university of France, where, as Professor Berti remarks, he was quite unknown.

Bruno began lecturing on the *De Anima* of Aristotle; a subject which afforded free play for the particular bent of his studies, and was probably employed for inculcating indirectly some of the principles of his Pantheistic Idealism. The topic was further suitable on account of its popularity. We have seen[1] how the Immortality of the Soul was the great theme of controversy in the preceding century. Though the interest it then excited had now begun to wane it was still a prominent subject of debate in Italian and French seats of learning.

For the next two years Bruno continued to lecture at Toulouse. During this time he wrote several works, one on the the soul—the subject of his early lectures—which is lost Probably its contents are, as Professor Berti surmises, to be found in the third part of his treatise *De umbris idearum.* He also wrote the first of his many works on the mystical philosophy of Raymund Lulli, which is also lost. Besides his literary and professorial work he held public disputations, after the fashion of the time, on certain propositions or theses, which he announced from time to time as being prepared to defend against all comers. But notwithstanding the publicity of his teachings it does not appear that Bruno was subjected to harsh treatment at Toulouse. It is true that he classes this city with Oxford and Paris as places where he had to encounter the fury of scholasticism,[2] and Bartholmèss, with his paucity of materials, infers

[1] See Chapter on Pomponazzi, above, p. 197, and compare Berti, *Vita*, p. 114.

[2] 'Scholasticum furorem.' Op. Lat., p. 624.

from these words that Bruno was compelled to make a hasty flight from Toulouse to escape the fate of Vanini and a few more martyrs of free-thought, who had fallen, or were destined to fall, victims to its notorious intolerance.[1] But the enmity he thus mentions, as having stirred among schoolmen and Peripatetics, was probably confined to a small circle, for we now know that Bruno's stay in Toulouse extended to two years and six months (not a few months only, as Bartholmèss supposed); and that he departed thence of his own free will. Moreover on his removal to Paris in 1579, the fame he had acquired by his Toulouse teachings, and the letters of recommendation he took with him from that seat of learning, enabled him to introduce himself to the city and university of Paris under very favourable auspices; for he tells us that his Doctor's degree, and his appointment as Ordinary Lecturer in the former university, gave him the privilege of teaching publicly in the university of the capital.[2]

For the first year after his arrival at Paris Bruno took no part in public teaching; being probably deterred by the plague which then ravaged the city. Several of his books were however written about this time; and perhaps formed the occupation of that leisure interval. But Bruno was not a mere student philosopher. The life of the recluse thinker was irksome to him. He craved the open arena of free teaching and discussion—interchange of thought with the world's foremost thinkers. This constituted in his case, as in that of Lessing, the very oxygen of his intellectual being. He accordingly began teaching on his own private account in the Sorbonne, in order, as he says, to bring himself to notice. 'Bruno was,' says Professor Berti,[3] 'the genuine type, the true ideal of the free professor of those times. In Toulouse, Paris, London, Oxford, Wittenberg, Prague, Zurich, Frankfort, he mounted the professor's rostrum, and lectured, without asking the protection or favour of any one. He goes from one university to the next, he opens one school against another; and when he encounters an obstacle, as he does at Marburg, he scornfully turns his steps in another direction. . . . Happily,' continues the Professor, 'the university in those days was not as yet guarded, confined, the fief of a privileged few. Bruno and others like him could enter it freely, could challenge its professors to single combat, and could lecture and dispute before scholars assembled from every

[1] Cf. the next chapter on Vanini, and on Sanchez see the *Skeptics of the French Renaissance.*

[2] It is unfortunate that in his picturesque chapter on Bruno, Mr. G. H. Lewes still adheres mainly to the narrative of Bartholomèss. Hence his account of Bruno is sorely deficient in chronological exactness. See *Hist. of Philosophy*, Edition iii., vol. ii. p. 91.

[3] *Vita*, p. 121.

part of Europe. Thus were developed, by intellectual gymnastics and emulation, those strong and laborious teachers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to whom modern nations are indebted for their literary and scientific advancement.

Lecturing at the Sorbonne, it was natural that Bruno should select a theological subject. He chose the thirty divine attributes contained in the first part of the *Summa* of Aquinas. This theme allowed considerable scope for the discussion of a semi-Pantheistic theology, of which no doubt Bruno availed himself; nor is this, as we already know, the only instance in which the wide intellectual success, the combined originality and profundity of the angel of schools found a sympathetic appreciation at the hands of philosophic Free-thinkers. His lectures, or it may have been notes of them, Bruno subsequently published under the title of *Dei Predicamenti di Dio.* By means of these and similar public teachings, Bruno's fame extended to the court of Henry III., where Italians were at that time in especial favour. The king is said to have expressed a wish to know Bruno; and, having made his acquaintance, consulted him on a subject of a *Memoria Technica*, which he professed to teach on the principles of Lulli's philosophy. As a token of the royal favour, Bruno was offered an Ordinary Lectureship in the university of Paris, which he refused on the ground of the obligation it entailed of attending mass. Some writers have thought that Bruno's refusal on this ground must have exposed him to the hazard of martyrdom; but in the comparatively peaceful circumstances of France and Paris in 1580–81, he ran no present risk of coming in contact with the fearful alternative, '*Le Messe ou la Mort.*' When he was subsequently offered a chair as extraordinary reader in philosophy, which was free from this obligation, Bruno accepted it. In return for the king's favour he dedicated to him his treatise, *De umbris idearum*, which contains the germs of his system, he also published a satire, *Cantu Circeo*, and a book written to elucidate and simplify Lulli's *Art*, but which a modern reader must admit stands itself in need both of elucidation and simplification. Bruno's successful lectures, court patronage, and influential society, made his first residence in Paris an agreeable episode in his career, and it was gratefully remembered by him in after life.

At the end of 1583 Bruno came to England. He brought with him letters of introduction from Henry III. to the French ambassador at the court of Elizabeth. This was Castelnuovo di Mauvissiere, an

[1] Berti, p. 128.

[2] 'De compendiosa architectura et complemente Artis Lulli.'

enlightened, tolerant, and generous man. He welcomed Bruno with great cordiality, and made him reside as a private gentleman in his own house. This was by far the happiest period in Bruno's life. He now enjoyed for the first time the *libertas philosophandi*[1]—a formula he is said to have originated—while, of the thing so defined, he certainly is, in Europe, one of the earliest and freest exponents. He could write and publish his philosophical works without let or hindrance. Enjoying the personal friendship of Castelnuovo, living on terms of affectionate intimacy with his family, preserving withal so much of his old independence that he was not even expected to attend mass, though the ambassador and his household were extremely punctilious in their devotional duties, Bruno had most of his time at his own command, and was able to pursue his studies without being harassed by the fear of poverty or the necessity of earning his bread. It is no marvel, says Professor Berti, if he called Castelnuovo his defence, his only refuge; and that in gratitude for the manifold favours of being housed, nourished, defended, freed, preserved in safety, he dedicated to him four of his writings, in order to proclaim to the world that to his patron alone is due, 'that the new-born philosophy of the Nolan muse is not dead amidst its swaddling-clothes.' As it was, 'the offspring of the Nolan muse' during this period was both numerous and robust, and attained an early and flourishing maturity. Some of Bruno's chief works were written and published while enjoying the dignified leisure of Castelnuovo's hospitality.[2] Nor was Bruno's undoubted genius for verbal discussion allowed to remain idle. The house of the French ambassador was the resort of a select few of the best contemporary representatives of English culture. There Bruno met Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Fulke Greville, Dyer, Harvey, the poet Spenser, Temple the translator of Ramus's *Dialectic*, and others who took an interest in literature and philosophy. In this congenial society the opinions

[1] 'Libertas philosophica.' Bruno, *de Lampade combinatoria*. Op. Lat., Ed. Gfrörer, p. 624. "La *liberta filosofica*, questa frase che egli adopera forse per il primo tra gli scrittori a lui coevi, significava un concetto quanto novo per il tempo tanto famigliare e commune per il Bruno, cioè, che la filosofia, la scienza non era sindacabile."—Berti, p. 211. Bartholmèss, i. p. 153, note 2.

[2] They are thus enumerated by Berti, p. 185 :—

1. Explicata triginta sigillorum, etc., dedicated to Castelnuovo.
2. La Cena delle Ceneri " " 1584.
3. De la Causa, principio et uno " " 1584.
4. De l' Infinito, universo e mondi " " 1584.
5. Spaccio de la Bestia trionfante, dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, 1584.
6. Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo, 1585.
7. De Gli eroici furori, dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, 1585.

and theories of the foremost spirits of the age, continental as well as English, were debated with freedom, sympathy, and intelligence. Bruno's work, the *Cena delle Ceneri*, is an offspring of these philosophical reunions—a reminiscence of ancient symposia;[1] and conveys a pleasing impression of the social urbanity, the varied learning, the profound thought and philosophical acuteness which characterized them. The religious questions which were then agitating Europe come in for their share of attention; and are debated with marvellous freedom from the prepossessions of Romanism, on the one hand, and Protestantism on the other. Professor Berti observes that these meetings of free-thinkers with their disputations on religion, under his own roof, afford a striking proof of the tolerance of Castelnuovo, who, judging from his opinion of the colloquy of Passy, disliked religious controversy, for the reason that religion 'Ne se peut bien entendre que par la foy et par humilite.'[2] As a distinguished guest of the French ambassador, and also as a thinker of considerable reputation, Bruno was presented to Queen Elizabeth; who, as usual with learned foreigners, seems to have left a favourable impression on him.[3] The eulogistic terms in which he was accustomed to speak of the English queen, and other heretic princes, formed one item in the charges which the Inquisition proffered against him.

But there is one episode in Bruno's English life which we must not pass over; and that is his brief connexion with Oxford. In addition to his craving for intellectual notoriety, he was possessed of the conviction that Providence destined him to be one of those 'mercurial spirits' occasionally sent from heaven to enlighten mankind.[4] Hence he was always desirous of some prominent position as a public teacher. This was probably the feeling that induced him to address the authorities of the University of Oxford, which he did in a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, prefixed to the work he first published after his arrival in this country—*Spiegazione di trenta sigilli.* This

[1] Barth., i. p. 131, compares the contemporary and more celebrated club of the 'Mermaid Tavern.'

[2] Berti, p. 160, note 3.

[3] He calls her 'grande Anfitrite, Diana, nume della Terra.' Comp. what Berti truly calls the excessive eulogies of Elizabeth in Op. Ital., i. pp. 144 and 230.

[4] *De Umbris Idearum*, p. 13. 'Non cessat providentia Deorum (dixerunt Ægyptii sacerdotes) statutis quibusdam temporibus mittere hominibus *Mercurios quosdam* etiamsi eosdem minime vel male receptum iri præcognoscant.' That Bruno considered himself one of these 'mercurial spirits' is clear from other passages in his works. Mocenigo, in his denunciation, affirmed that Bruno had confessed to him that he wished to make himself the author of a new sect, under the name of the New Philosophy. Cf. Berti, p. 138, note.

letter is a very curious production.[1] Indeed, its vainglorious language is only explicable on the writer's profound conviction of his heaven-inspired philosophical mission. Either this epistle, or the credentials Bruno brought with him from Paris, or else his general fame as a philosopher, procured for him the coveted permission to lecture in the university. Accordingly, he lectured on the 'immortality of the soul;' and on 'the five-fold sphere;'[2] in other words, on subjects allied to his theological metaphysics and his Copernican astronomy. It is needless to state that the Oxford of 1583 did not evince very warm sympathies with a theology so far removed both from Romanist and Anglican creeds, nor with a physical science not to be found in Aristotle. Bruno, who was so well acquainted with continental universities, estimates the scientific and philosophical acquirements of Oxford at an extremely low rate. He calls it 'una costellazione di pedantesca ostinatissima ignoranza e presunzione mista con una rustica incivilità, che farebbe prevaricar la pazienza di Giobbe.'[3] Bruno clearly was far from possessing the patience of Job; and a short experience enabled him to perceive the futility of continuing to pay unwelcome addresses to the 'widow of sound learning,'[4] as he wittily nicknamed our great university.

Bruno was at Oxford during the festivities and intellectual tournaments with which the university celebrated the arrival of the Polish Prince Alasco, in 1583. He took a public part in the contests, as the defender of the Copernican system, against the Ptolemaic; and as the implacable foe of the Peripateticism then rampant at Oxford. Fifteen times, Bruno assures us, he closed the mouth of the unfortunate Doctor whom the university had selected as the Goliath of their Philistinism,[5] to maintain the dogmas of the immobility of the earth and the moveableness of the heavens. The dispute grew warm. Bruno complains of the incivility and discourtesy of 'the Pig' chosen to oppose him; and lauds the patience and humanity with which he

[1] See it quoted by Berti, p. 167, note 1. It is translated, but not very correctly, by Bartholmèss, i. p. 122, note 1, *e.g.* describing his 'general philanthropy,' Bruno says, 'Qui non magis Italum quam Britannum, marem quam fœminam, mitratum quam coronatum, togatum quam armatum cucullatum hominem quam sine cuculla virum . . . diligit,' which Bartholmèss renders, 'qui aime d'une égale affection Italiens et Anglais, mères et jeunes épouses!' etc.

[2] Opera Ital., i. 179. Ed. Wagner.

[3] Op. Ital., i. 179.

[4] 'Vedova de le buone lettere, per quanto appartiene a la professione di filosofia e reali matematiche ne le quali mentre sono tutti ciechi, vengono questi asini, e ne si vendono per oculati,' etc., etc. Op. Ital., i. p. 123.

[5] This was a certain Dr. Lyson, as appears from Wood's *Antiq. Oxon.*

repelled his swinish attacks, as a proof of his Neapolitan origin, and his nurture under a brighter sky. It is of course too much to expect of the controversialist of the time, even when, like Bruno, he is a native of the genial south, that he should exercise the same courtesy in recounting, as in performing his deeds of intellectual prowess.

The biographer of Bruno, who knows what disasters are still in store for him, feels a natural repugnance at quitting this peaceful and happy period of his life. Professor Berti speculates on what would have been Bruno's future intellectual development had he continued to live in England. His general lot would have been very different; he would have escaped at least the fate which ultimately befel him;[1] though his own restlessness would in all likelihood have exposed him to difficulties. The lesson of toleration was as yet very imperfectly acquired in this country; and Bruno's philosophy, which he must needs have taught with his usual courage and unreserve, was both too opposed to generally received forms of Christianity, and too alien from the practical genius of Englishmen, to be acceptable to more than the narrow circles of thinkers who had imbibed the broader culture of continental, and especially Italian universities. With all the felicitous circumstances of his situation as an esteemed inmate of Castelnuovo's house, there were intermingled some few drawbacks to his happiness. The climate of England was such a wretched contrast to that of his beloved Naples; the coarse, almost brutal manners of Englishmen, their insular arrogance and ignorance, their insuperable dislike of foreigners, differed so completely from the refinement and gentle courtesy of his own countrymen, that Bruno's complete acclimatization would have been a protracted, if not impossible process. England in the sixteenth century was, we must remember, far behind Italy in knowledge and culture as well as in other elements of civilization. The combined pedantry and ignorance that Bruno found in Oxford, and which he castigated so vigorously in *La Cena de la Ceneri*, was only the academic maturity of defects which characterized the average English gentleman. Under all the circumstances of the case I am of opinion that Bruno was unsuited by birth, temperament and intellect to lead a genuinely happy life in our cold, gloomy, and dull island. Some foretaste of the difficulties continued residence here would have occasioned, was afforded by the outcry which assailed him on account of his free criticism of Oxford ignorance, and English ill-manners, in the *Cena de*

[1] Hallam, who also speculates on the same contingency, observes: 'It had been well for Bruno if he had kept himself under the protection of Diana (Queen Elizabeth). The "chaste beams of that watery moon" were less scorching than the fires of the Inquisition.' *Literature of Europe*, ii. p. 191.

la Ceneri. His remarks gave such umbrage, that Bruno found it expedient to give a modified version of his criticism in his next published work, the *De la Causa principio et uno.*[1]

Towards the close of 1585 Bruno returned to Paris in the suite of Castelnuovo. Soon after his arrival he resumed his occupation of lecturing and disputing in the Sorbonne. This his Doctor's degree from Toulouse, as well as his former position as Extraordinary Reader of Philosophy, enabled him to do without requiring the permission of the authorities. He selected, to defend his theses, an enthusiastic disciple called Hennequin, who afterwards edited and published his defence. Bruno's contests during this second sojourn in Paris were with the Peripatetics, and seem to have excited both attention and some degree of animosity. Nevertheless, it was not on account of this excitement that he left the French capital in the early part of 1586; but rather because of the civil discords which were then agitating France, and in accordance with a determination he had some time previously expressed of visiting other continental universities. This resolution he carried into effect by visiting Marburg, where he arrived in July, 1586. One of his first acts at Marburg was the inscription of his name among the scholars of the university as 'Jordanus Nolanus Neapolitanus, Theologiæ Doctor Romanensis.' Having thus asserted his membership, he demanded of the Rector permission to lecture publicly. This that functionary, after consultation with the faculty of philosophy, thought proper to refuse 'for grave reasons.' Bruno was so indignant at this treatment—so different from all his prior experience of university usages—that he went to the Rector's house and rated him soundly for acting in contravention to the rights of nations, the customs of all the German universities, and all human studies. Bruno's biographers have been puzzled to discover the 'grave reasons' which induced the authorities of Marburg to act as they did. Professor Berti is probably right in supposing that their Protestant sensitiveness took alarm at the designation, Doctor in Roman Theology, which he appended to his name; though that was the sole title by which he could claim to lecture in any university in Europe.

Bruno immediately left Marburg, and after a few days' stay at Mayence, arrived at Wittenberg. Here he was received with courtesy. He was immediately allowed to lecture, without any inquiry into his religious or philosophical creed, and without the production of any letters of recommendation which he had received from different princes and universities.[2] His lecture-room was speedily crowded, and now,

[1] Op. Ital., i. Comp. Berti, p. 178.

[2] In a valedictory oration which Bruno addressed to the university autho-

before a Lutheran audience, Bruno set forth his sublime speculations on the Infinite just as he had before the Romanists of Toulon and Paris, and the Anglicans of Oxford. The first year of his Wittenberg residence he devoted to these metaphysical speculations, which also gave rise to two treatises on Lulli's system. During the second year, 1588, he lectured on Aristotle's *Organon*, probably employing it as a basis for inculcating Lulli's logic. Bruno stayed at Wittenberg two years, and would probably have stayed longer, but a change on the throne of Saxony, by which Christian I. became Elector in name, and Casimir, his relative, a jealous Calvinist, Elector in reality, threatened to give Calvinists a superiority over Lutherans in the University of Wittenberg. His Genevan experiences had taught Bruno the peculiarly harsh and bitter nature of Calvinistic intolerance. He therefore took his leave of Wittenberg and the Lutheran friends he had formed there, with much regret on both sides. So cordial had been his relations with the tolerant Lutheranism which, under Melanchthon's benign influence, at that time reigned in Wittenberg, that the rumour was circulated that he had joined the Lutheran Church. He had no doubt manifested his appreciation of the anti-papal traditions of Wittenberg, and concurred in the Lutheran definition of the Pope as Antichrist; but it does not appear, as was afterwards alleged, that he wrote a panegyric of Satan as a praise-worthy contrast to the Vicar of Christ.

From Wittenberg Bruno went to Prague. On his arrival here he published two works which he dedicated to the Spanish ambassador at the court of Rudolf II. This monarch, the patron of Kepler and Tycho Brahe—was a devout believer in occult science. He spent his days in searching for the philosopher's stone, and his nights in surveying the stars for astrological purposes. Bruno might have expected to find him a patron of the Lullian Cabbala, to which he was himself becoming more and more addicted. The works he had dedicated to the Spanish ambassador having failed of their purpose, *i.e.* to bring him into notice, Bruno determined to address the Emperor himself. For this purpose he composed a work with the striking title, *One Hundred and Sixty Articles against the Mathematicians and Philosophers of the Present Time.* To this he prefixed a dedication, in which he claims the utmost liberty of judgment in the liberal sciences, affirming that in these matters he does not

rities of Wittenberg, he thus recounts their frank and generous reception of him: 'Non nasum introsistis, non sannas exacuistis, bucca non sunt inflatæ pulpita non strepuerunt, in me non est scholasticus furor (as at Toulouse) incitatus . . . Interim et philosophicam libertatem illibatam conservatis.' Op. Lat., p 624. Compare Bartholmèss, i. 155.

allow the authority of parents, of masters, of traditions or of customs. In philosophy, truth must be beheld with one's own eyes, not with those of another. He avows that his independence and devotion to truth have cost him much; nevertheless he has come victoriously out of every struggle, sustained by a conviction of truth, and guided by a divine and superior light.[1] The Emperor accepted the book, and sent 300 thalers, as a present, to Bruno. The money was most acceptable, for his circumstances were now in a very straitened condition. But though he was thus enabled to subsist and pay his way for the time, his position at Prague was unsatisfactory. He lacked what had become to him the essential of a happy existence—public lectures and disputings, the encouragement and excitement produced by the applause of enthusiastic pupils. Again Bruno moved and this time to Helmstadt; where under the patronage of the House of Brunswick, the new university founded in 1576 was rising into fame. Bartholmèss and other biographers of Bruno have asserted that he left Prague with letters of recommendation to the court of Brunswick, which obtained for him the education of the young Duke Henry Julius; but neither in his known works nor in the Venice documents is there anything to support this assertion. Equally devoid of foundation is another report concerning Bruno's Helmstadt life, viz. that he was chosen by the university to deliver an oration at the funeral of the reigning Duke. That he read an oration on the occasion is certain; but it was not at the solicitation of the university, or of any portion of it. It was merely the exercise he, as usual, set himself on arriving at a new university, to elicit public attention. In this he succeeded. The young Duke read Bruno's speech; and was so pleased with it that he bestowed on him great commendations, as well as the more tangible recognition of a sum of money. Bruno might, after such an auspicious beginning, have expected a long and peaceful career in the Helmstadt University; but a dispute with Boetius, the superintendent of the Evangelical Church, led to his excommunication by that functionary. Bruno appealed against the judgment; but probably mistrusting the issue of the appeal against such a potentate, he left Helmstadt quietly, and in April, 1590, we find him at Frankfort, whence he issued (without naming them) a decree of fulmination against the Brunswick theologians.

At Frankfort Bruno became acquainted with the celebrated publishers Wechel, worthy successors of the Aldii and Stephens of a preceding age. Their house was the resort of all the learning and culture which came to Frankfort. These estimable persons received

[1] Berti, p. 223.

Bruno with great cordiality, and procured him lodgings in a Carmelite convent at their own expense. Frankfort was then celebrated for its fairs, which took place twice a year, and drew together merchants and traders from every country in Europe. Among the rest who visited it on these occasions were learned men who came to inspect the wares of its numerous book-shops, and to exchange literary and philosophical news. At one or other of the principal book marts these men, representatives of most of the universities in Europe, were in the habit of congregating and discussing different learned subjects, as mathematics, astronomy, theology and philosophy. The book-shops thus subserved the ends which are now attained by literary clubs and newspapers, and the meetings of learned societies. They were intellectual stock-exchanges, centres for the intercommunication and diffusion of different literary products. These reunions we may well suppose were admirably suited to our skeptic's taste; and he took part in them with his usual enthusiasm.

Among those who came to the spring fair of 1591 were two Venetian booksellers, Ciotto and Britanno, the former of whom kept a well-known book-store in Venice at the sign of the Minerva. They took lodgings near the Carmelite monastery, where Bruno had taken up his quarters. They fell in with him on several occasions, and the discourse, as was inevitable, turned on Bruno's varied contributions to philosophical literature, and his opinions. On their return to Venice they took with them one of Bruno's works just published in Frankfort, probably (so Professor Berti thinks) the work *De Monade Numero et Figura*. This work Ciotto showed to a young Venetian of noble family, but of superstitious and weak intellect, who used to frequent his shop. It would appear that this man had dabbled in some branch of the sciences known as occult; and he inferred from Bruno's book that he had in reserve a large amount of esoteric lore, which the work only hinted at. Bruno thus seemed to be a teacher precisely adapted for himself. He prevailed on his friend Ciotto to forward a letter, begging him to come to Venice to instruct him. He himself followed up Ciotto's espistle by a missive of his own, addressed directly to Bruno, and requesting him to come to him with all convenient speed.

Fifteen years' wandering over Europe had only intensified the love that Bruno always cherished for Italy. He regarded the invitation of Mocenigo as a providential call homewards to the sunny skies, the genial climate, the gentler and more cultured people of his native land. It is possible, though his parents were both dead, that some friend or relative may have still been living in the well-remembered neighbourhood of Mount Cicala, whence he had wandered into a

world which, to his passionate longing after freedom, had been little else than Egyptian bondage, or the narrow confines of a gaol cell. For a moment was forgotten, or perhaps unseen, like a viper lurking behind flowers, the authority of the Inquisition, the racks and pinions of the Holy Office, the processes for heresy which so many years before had driven him from his home, the martyrdoms for free-thought, of which not a few must have been within his own personal knowledge. He only saw the fascinating aspects of his early and only love. He therefore immediately closed with Mocenigo's offer. Not only so, but he departed from Frankfort in such haste that he left uncorrected the last few pages of a book which the brothers Wechel were publishing for him.

Bruno arrived at Venice in 1592, and placed himself at the disposal of his new patron and pupil. The connexion was ill-omened in every respect. Mocenigo was the complete antipodes of his master in mental qualities, education and disposition; indeed, he was a gloomy, superstitious, mistrustful fanatic. It is difficult at first sight to conceive what Bruno could find to teach such an unpromising pupil. But in the Venetian documents he says that what Mocenigo wished to learn, and what he therefore imparted, consisted of his Lullian Cabbala, together with his method of artificial memory. But whatever the tuition, it would seem that it was not at first of a nature calculated to arouse Mocenigo's extreme orthodox sensitiveness. The intercourse of master and pupil assumed such an amicable character, that Bruno was prevailed upon to take up his abode in Mocenigo's house. Meanwhile he followed his usual avocations; for in addition to his stipulated converse with his pupil, he was engaged in superintending the publication of new works; while he spent much of his leisure in the different bookshops, especially in that of Ciotto, and held controversies with those who frequented these literary lounges. Nor were these the only opportunities which Bruno enjoyed for free discussion, and of which he availed himself with a readiness which under the circumstances betrays a want of ordinary caution. In Venice, as in other Italian towns, the spirit of the Renaissance, and the momentous and interesting questions it started, gave rise to the formation of private debating clubs, in which the varied topics then agitating the mind of Europe, were discussed with more or less freedom and completeness. There were two resorts of this kind in Venice,—one, in the house of an opulent merchant, Secchini, the other in that of Morosini, a man of culture and learning, who occupied the important post of chief historiographer of Venice. The reunions at Secchini's occupied themselves chiefly with scientific discoveries, while those at Morosini's discussed

questions of literature and philosophy. To Morosini's seances Bruno was introduced by Ciotto soon after his arrival, and was received with great cordiality. The part which Bruno took in the discussions there was afterwards borne witness to before the Venetian inquisitors by Morosini himself, as having been of a literary and philosophical character, and having nothing to do with religion, whence we may note that the complete severance between philosophy and theology, which was an axiom with the free-thinkers of the Renaissance, was an admitted principle with these private discussion clubs; nay, it probably constituted their chief *raison d'être.*

During this time Bruno paid occasional visits to the neighbouring university of Padua, and gave private lectures to some German students. The longest stay he made there did not however exceed two months, so that those writers are in error who affirm that he resided in Padua for some time, and became acquainted with Galileo. The chronology of Bruno's life, as finally determined by the Venetian documents, proves that he could have had no personal acquaintance with Galileo, who did not commence lecturing at Padua until some months after his long incarceration had begun. The only traceable point of contact between the two men consists in the fact that the extradition decree which surrendered Bruno to the Inquisition at Rome was signed by the same official who invited Galileo to lecture at Padua. Between his occupations at Venice and occasional visits to Padua, Bruno passed some seven or eight months. All the while the manifold and radical dissimilarities between himself and Mocenigo were growing to an open rupture. Portions of the master's teaching had aroused the suspicion of the mistrustful and narrow-minded pupil, who perhaps took 'omne ignotum pro hæretico.' He confided his suspicions to his confessor; and received in return the advice to ascertain Bruno's errors more fully, and then to denounce him to the Inquisition. From this time Mocenigo acted the degrading part of a spy on his poor unsuspicious tutor; whom he had invited from Frankfort, into whose confidence he had wound himself, and who by his own desire was the inmate of his house and the companion of his leisure hours. He seems to have used the knowledge he had acquired of the susceptible points of Bruno's enthusiastic temperament to draw him out, as De Francon did Vanini, and make him commit himself. Ultimately, having procured sufficient materials for the accusation, he determined to denounce his guest to the Inquisition; impelled thereto, as he himself says, by the advice of his confessor, and the bidding of his conscience. The denunciation was formally made by a letter dated the 23rd of May.

Meanwhile Bruno discovered, by the altered demeanour of his

pupil, and by questions proposed with the obvious purpose of convicting him of heresy, the secret conspiracy that was being formed against him. Accordingly he determined to return to Frankfort. He sent all his MSS. already completed to the press, put his other affairs in order, and attempted, not very wisely it may be said, to take leave of his treacherous pupil on the 21st of May. Mocenigo, however, would not part with him. First with persuasions, then with threats, he endeavoured to persuade Bruno to remain. Finding his efforts ineffectual, he resolved to anticipate the action of the Inquisition, and even his own denunciation, by making him a prisoner. This he effected in a way which proves his own transformation, not an uncommon one, from the superstitious weakling to the bloodthirsty zealot. Towards midnight of Friday, the 22nd of May, he entered the bedchamber where Bruno was asleep, accompanied by his servant and five or six gondoliers of the neighbourhood, and on the pretext of wishing to converse with him conducted him to a garret, and then locked him in. The next day Mocenigo forwarded his denunciation to the Inquisitors[1] who immediately sent an officer to his house. He took formal possession of the prisoner, brought him down from the garret, and locked him up in a warehouse on the ground floor of the house, whence he was removed on the night of Saturday, the 23rd of May, into the prison of the Inquisition. With this ill-omened event ends the free life of our unhappy free-thinker. Henceforth there remains for him a cruel imprisonment of eight long years, terminating with the stake.

Bruno's trial before the Venetian Inquisitors began on the 26th of May. The booksellers Ciotto and Brutanno, who had known him in Frankfort, were cited to bear evidence concerning him. Answering the interrogatories of his judges, Bruno explained the reason why he had left Frankfort and come to Venice. He then proceeded to recount in order the chief events of his life. For several days he continued his narrative, and this autobiography, preserved in the Venetian documents, now constitutes the sole authority for most of his life. Coming to his opinions, he laid stress on the doctrine of Twofold Truth, then so generally recognized in Italy. He said that he was a Philosopher, not a Theologian; as such he claimed a freedom of inquiry and exposition to which he confessed a theologian would have had no claim. This is the key-note of his defence, and he repeatedly recurs to it. He admitted that indirectly his doctrine might come into conflict with the Christian faith just as it might with the teaching of Aristotle or Plato. He denied that he had ever

[1] *Documenti interno a Giordano Bruno.* Rome, 1880. They are translated in Miss Frith's *History*, pp. 262–265.

taught or written anything directly contrary to Christianity. He then proceeded to expound his philosophical creed, without trying, as Professor Berti well remarks, to minimize or hide its implication. He distinctly avowed that he believed in an universe infinite in extent, and infinite also as consisting of innumerable worlds. He maintained that these worlds, scattered through space, were like our own. This universe, he believed, was governed by a general and constant law, which he termed Providence, by means of which everything lives, grows, moves, and attains its perfection. The Divine Being possesses those principal attributes, power, wisdom, and goodness, in other words, mind, intellect, and love.[1] The first of these is the source of general existence, the second is the cause of particular or distinct existence, while the concord or harmony between these two is sustained by the third, or love. The word creation expressed, he said, the dependence of the world on its first cause; which is true whether we conceive it to be eternal, or created. He freely admitted having doubted, in terms of the natural reason, the Incarnation of the Word, called by philosophers the Intellect, or son of the mind; so also the Holy Spirit, or, according to theologians, the third Person of the Trinity was by him regarded and defined as the soul of the universe, in harmony with the doctrine expressed in Virgil's verses:—

> 'Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus,
> Mens agitat molem,'

or in accordance with the passage of Solomon, 'Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum.'[2]

The Inquisitors, probably puzzled at a scheme of theology, which, preserving the terms of Christian orthodoxy, interpreted them in a manner so novel, requested Bruno to repeat the outlines of his system. He readily consented, using nearly the same terms. They suggested that he had been accused of Arianism, to which he immediately answered, that in conversation he had more than once avouched his opinion that the doctrine of Arius was less pernicious than was commonly supposed. With equal readiness he replied to other allegations respecting his relation to the Church; maintaining that he held what the Church taught, at the same time admitting that he was to blame for not observing her rules more precisely; and promised amendment for the time to come. Being asked his opinion respecting miracles, he answered that he had always believed the miracles of Christ were

[1] Comp. Op. Ital., ii. 279.

[2] Berti, *Vita*, p. 259. Comp., Book of Wisdom i. 7. *Πνεῦμα κυρίου πεπλήρωκε τὴν οἰκουμένην, καὶ τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα γνῶσιν ἔχει φωνῆς.*

divine, true, real, and not pretended—consequently a secondary testimony of His divinity, as its higher attestation is *the Law of the Gospels.* He said he believed in the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ really and substantially; only he excused himself for not attending mass, assigning as an impediment his excommunication. To the same impediment he ascribed his neglect of confession for sixteen years; although he held that the Sacrament of Penance was ordained to purge our sins, and he believed that every man dying in mortal sin would be damned.

Bruno's defence had already comprehended some of the counts of Mocenigo's indictment; but more alarming ones still remained. Among other strange allegations, Mocenigo said, Bruno had told him that Jesus was a crafty personage, who might easily have foreseen His crucifixion, because He did crafty deeds to deceive the people—that He was a magician and performed apparent miracles, and so also did the apostles—that he himself had a mind to perform as many, and even more than they did. That there was no punishment for sin. That souls passed from one body into another, and are begotten of corruption as all other animals. That our faith is full of blasphemies—that the monks are apes. That St. Thomas and all the doctors are ignoramuses; and that he knew enough to put all the theologians in the world to silence—that he intended to apply himself to the Art of Divination so that all nations should run after him. That the usages of the Church then were not those the apostles employed. That the world could not last much longer as it was—that a general reform was needful—that on this point he hoped great things of the king of Navarre—that he was therefore anxious to publish his works so as to bring himself into credit, because he was sure of a place at the head of this reform, and would enjoy the treasures of others—that he was fond of women, and thought it no sin to obey the impulses of Nature.

Such an imbroglio of accusations, probable, specious and utterly absurd could only have occurred to a mind like Mocenigo's, a combination of intellectual imbecility and gloomy fanaticism. To all these allegations Bruno gave a distinct and even vehement denial. When *e.g.* he was confronted with the charge of calling Jesus crafty, a doer of cunning works, his features assumed an expression of deep pain, while he exclaimed he did not know how such a thing could have been imputed to him. When he was further charged with terming Christ a magician, and saying he was confident he could do the same miracles that Christ and His apostles had done, he lifted his hand to heaven, and in a passionate tone of voice said, 'What thing is this? Who has invented this devilish accusation?

Not only have I never uttered such things, but they have never even crossed my imagination. O God, what does this mean? I would rather die than say such a thing.' He had himself given a list of his works to the tribunal. Of these he fully admitted the authorship and accepted the responsibility. He gave reasons why some, which were printed in London bore Venice or Paris on their title-pages. He added—not the least mark of the *bonâ fides* and candour which characterize Bruno in these trying scenes—that his writings sufficiently demonstrated the measure of his excellence; and that no examination of them would discover that he had sought to bring the Catholic religion into contempt.

Assuming the right of the tribunal to inquire into the religious opinions of Bruno, it cannot be said that he was treated with undue harshness by the Venetian Inquisition. Partly this was owing to the independent status of the Holy Office in that city,[1]—a reflex of her free institutions, which induced a more cautious and impartial treatment of those who came before it. Partly it may be ascribed to the subtle policy of pretended kindness and sympathy by which the unwary victims were further entangled in the toils the Inquisition spread around them. On this occasion they seem to have treated Bruno's assumed errors almost as if they were the inevitable aberrations of one who starting from Philosophy had accidentally come into conflict with Theology. They passed over those points in his confession in which the divergency from orthodox belief was most clearly marked, and dwelt on those on which he himself had expressed something like a regret for such a seeming antagonism. This was precisely the seductive method best adapted for Bruno's warm and enthusiastic temperament. Easily hardened by opposition and abuse, he was evidently amenable to the milder treatment of gentle remonstrance, semi-acquiescent protests and persuasive reasoning. There is at least no doubt that, like his contemporary Galileo, Bruno yielded to the hypocritical blandishments of the Holy Office, and fell a victim to its unholy cunning in discovering the more easily accessible or assailable points in the characters of the unhappy beings brought within its jurisdiction.

At the end of his second examination (May 30th) he expressed some regret that in his works he had discoursed too much as a philosopher and not sufficiently as a good Christian. On the 3rd of June he told his judges that he 'detested and abhorred all the errors he had com-

[1] Probably this did not differ greatly from what it was a century later in 1685, when the complete subordination of the Inquisition to the Deputies of the Senate was observed, and described by Bishop Burnet in his work, *Some Letters from Switzerland and Italy*, pp. 154–5.

mitted up to the present time against the Catholic faith, all the heresies he had held, and the doubts he had entertained respecting the belief and dogmas of holy Church,' adding, 'I repent of having done, held, said, believed, or doubted things not Catholic, and I implore this sacred tribunal, in pity to my infirmity, to receive me into the Church, providing for me remedies useful for my salvation, and to have mercy upon me.' On the 30th of July, when brought before the Venetian Inquisitors for the last time, he renewed his protestations of penitence. 'It may be,' he said to the judges, 'that in such a long course of time I have erred and strayed from holy Church in other ways than those I have already indicated, and am thereby entangled in other censures; but so far as I know, and I have thought much concerning the matter, I am quite unaware of it; I have confessed and do now readily confess my errors, and I put myself in the hands of your most illustrious tribunal to receive a remedy on behalf of my salvation. As to my sorrow for my misdeeds, I am unable to say how great it is, nor can I adequately express my feelings.' Having uttered these words he fell on his knees and continued:—'I humbly ask pardon of the Lord God, and of your most illustrious tribunal, for all the errors I have committed, and am ready to endure what your prudence may prescribe for me, and what you deem expedient for my soul. I further entreat that you will immediately award me a punishment, whose excess may be a public notification in due proportion to the disgrace I may have brought on my sacred habit as a monk. And if by the mercy of God, and of your most illustrious tribunal, my life shall be granted, I promise to effect such a marked reformation of it, as shall recompense for the scandal I have given.'[1]

With the exception of distinct and repeated refusals to recant, and the defiant utterance with which he met his final sentence, nearly eight years after, these are Bruno's last authentic words. They serve to show that the infamous methods of the Inquisition had succeeded in temporarily humbling one of the most daring spirits that ever lived. How long the humiliation really lasted, by what means it was effected, how far its form was suggested by the officers of the Inquisition, or was the *ex animo* confession of Bruno himself, we shall never know. Remembering Bruno's undaunted spirit, I incline to the belief that it was extorted from the poor wretch by a promise of liberty, or by the tortures of the rack; or it may have been induced by the debilitating effect of a dreary imprisonment on such a freedom-loving spirit, or by some other of the iniquitous means by which the Holy Office induced false confessions when they were unable to obtain true.

[1] Berti, p. 264, and documents in the same work, pp. 384–5.

After this examination and recantation, Bruno was remitted to his prison; where for some inexplicable reason he remained for seven or eight weeks, without, so far as is known, any further proceedings being taken respecting him. At the end of that period the acts of his process were forwarded to Rome; and Cardinal Sanseverino, the chief Inquisitor, wrote in September requiring Bruno's extradition. The Venetian authorities seem to have treated the request with some coldness, whether as evincing their customary jealousy of foreign interference, or as seems to me not unlikely, Bruno found some secret support, either among his judges or among persons able to influence them. More than once Sanseverino, already thirsting for the blood of our poor skeptic, had to repeat his demand. Special grounds were urged for the request. Thus he was claimed as having been a native of Naples, and because, in early years, he had been implicated in other processes for heresy. It was also alleged that Bruno was not an ordinary heretic; he was a monk, nay, more, he was an heresiarch monk; it was precisely one of those extraordinary cases which all the Inquisition tribunals had been accustomed to resign to the jurisdiction of the chief office at Rome.

At last, as an act of personal favour to the Pope, whom it was desirable to conciliate, it was deemed politic to yield to the request. The Venetian authorities gave up Bruno; who was forwarded to Rome in January, 1593,[1] to meet the terrible doom which there awaited him. Never did the malignant destiny which has so often dogged the course of Free-thinkers provide a fate so atrocious and pitiless as that which thus befel Bruno. Never was the irony of existence more painfully exemplified. A martyr's death immediately following his trial, and only some months after his first apprehension, would no doubt have seemed a sufficiently bitter fate for an earnest truth-seeker like Bruno; but in itself death had for him, as we shall find, no terrors. A few agonizing tortures at the stake, his ashes scattered to the four winds, the consequent commingling of his being, physical and mental, with the infinities of Nature and of God, which he regarded as the highest destiny of a sentient creature, would have hardly caused him a momentary pang of regret. Something, as we know, he was willing to concede to his foes for the sake of the restricted liberty he had hitherto enjoyed. But, from the point of view of his speculations and aspirations, it is evident that Bruno must have had a surfeit of existence. He found it incompatible with the wild,

[1] He was committed to the Inquisition prison at Rome, on the 27th of February, 1593, as appears by a list of prisoners in the custody of the Holy Office, drawn up on the 5th of April, 1599. See Roman Documents, collected by Prof. Berti, *Copernico*, etc., p. 224.

passionate freedom, the unrestrained liberty of thought, feeling, and in some degree of action, on which alone he could bestow the name of freedom. His whole life had been a warfare with restriction: in his youth, moral and social; in manhood, religious and philosophical. The limits of earth itself were too narrow for his soaring intellect. Death was but the deliverance from this enforced servitude—the commencement of a new and wider experience, the dawning of a new era of liberty. But incarceration for seven long years in dark and loathsome dungeons, for a man whose every breath was an aspiration for freedom, whose every thought centred in her divine attributes, and whose every act was part of a life-long struggle to possess her, imparts to his lot a peculiar aspect of intense harshness and grim irony. No doubt history presents us with other examples of still longer imprisonments; in which disciples of liberty have been immured in the Bastilles of religious and political tyranny for nearly their whole lives. The singular aggravation of Bruno's destiny lay in his overpowering passion for freedom, and in his conviction of her unlimited character. A prison may well be a cruel confinement to a man who is not impatient of the ordinary restraits of human existence, but must be immeasurably more galling to one for whom earth itself is a mere prison cell. To a bird of moderate flight and aspiration the bounds of a cage will still seem intolerable, but to catch a skylark at the very highest point of its soaring and tuneful flight, to entrap an eagle in his lofty eyrie and immure it in a narrow, dark cage, would be a punishment more cruel than death.

Over nearly the whole of that seven years' incarceration in the Inquisition prison at Rome, a darkness and stillness more profound than those of the grave are still suspended like a dreary funeral-pall. What Bruno's trials were; how often his limbs were stretched on the rack, what other tortures, mental and physical, he was compelled to endure, what cunning and ruthless efforts were made by his gaolers to break down his indomitable spirit, to crush fully and finally his irrepressible yearnings after freedom, to transform the free-thinker into the religious slave of a creed blasphemously called Christian, we shall never know. The long duration of his imprisonment[1] seems to imply that unusual pains were taken to convert a heresiarch whose fame was European, or at least to present him in his last hours in the penitent state of mind which would reflect so much lustre on his holy tormentors and be such an edifying spectacle to the faithful.

[1] Comp. the list of Inquisition prisoners above mentioned, from which it appears that Bruno was in 1599 the only prisoner in charge of the Roman Inquisition whose incarceration commenced in 1593. Cf. Berti, *Copernico*, etc., p. 227.

His Venice recantation, if genuine and unforced, is a proof that Bruno was not insensible to some of the motive forces which the Inquisition knew how to bring to bear upon heretics, and it is quite conceivable that during his long incarceration at Rome his mind may have wavered occasionally under the debilitating effects of torture and privation on the one hand, or flattery and indulgence on the other; but one thing at least is certain, these fluctuations were only temporary; Bruno's general and final attitude of mind, as we shall see when we come to the last scenes of his life, was one of heroic and adamantine firmness.

Meanwhile we may take advantage of Bruno's imprisonment to consider the general character of his philosophy, and the influence to be allotted to Skepticism, both in its origin and in the shape it finally appeared. But, as a necessary preliminary to this enquiry, it will be as well to cast a brief glance at a few of his works, which have an especial reference to our subject.

The earliest of these and one of the first of his extant works is his comedy *Il Candelajo*. This drama marks the young skeptic at a stage of his intellectual development when he has discerned the utter vanity and falsehood of much that holds a high place in human conviction, or established usages. Its chief characters represent the *prevalent* ignorance, pedantry, and superstition, with which he waged war for the greater part of his life; nor unhappily is this the only particular in which it is a reflex of Bruno's age; for the licence of its language and manners reminds us only too faithfully of features common to most of the literature of the Renaissance. But its main interest centres in its unconscious portrayal of the mind of its author. Thus the wild chaotic disorder depicted in its pages, indicates a mind in which principles and opinions of the most contradictory kind had made a battle-field for their fiercest struggles; while the *tout ensemble* of the work, as well as the author's profession of faith in the introduction, shows that he had already learnt to reconcile the antimonies of the universe, to neutralize its contradictions by means of juxtaposition and subordination, to merge varying elements in an all-inclusive oneness, and by the fiery glow of his potent fancy to fuse the pettiness and limitations of finite things in an unbounded and inscrutable infinite. Thus he declares his philosophy in his dedication to La Signora Morgana—perhaps a real personage elevated to a noble and picturesque ideal, like the Beatrice of Dante or the Laura of Petrarca—'Bear in mind, Lady, my Credo, which I need not teach you: Time takes away everything, and gives everything. All things change, nothing is annihilated. One thing only exists which is unchangeable. Only the One is eternal and abides eternally one, the same, and identical.

With this philosophy I enlarge my mind and magnify my intellect.'[1] Of still more importance for our purpose is the celebrated work *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante.* Few literary productions of the sixteenth century have raised more controversy than this. By some writers it has been held to be the original of the notorious but mythical work *De Tribus Impostoribus.* The Triumphant Beast to be expelled, variously interpreted as Christianity or the Romish Church, is in reality Dogma, peripatetic and scholastic as well as religious. The aim of the work is mainly rationalistic and skeptical. Bruno declares war to the knife against unveracities of every kind. He would dethrone all authorities and powers which have usurped wrongful dominion over men, and replace them by more genial and humane duties.

The plan of this remarkable work is this:—Jupiter, the chief of the Olympian court, is represented as an old man, who, having exhausted the pleasures and dissipations of youth, is now willing to reform. Having tired out the flesh he is desirous of living to the Spirit. Like the royal Jewish libertine, he is inclined to pronounce on all human delights and pursuits the verdict: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' To stimulate his new-born zeal for reformation, he observes that mortals manifest a growing disinclination to render to himself and the different members of his court the worship they consider their due. One great obstacle to the execution of his resolve is the actual state of heaven itself. The different constellations and heavenly bodies are but records of the infamy, lust and ambition of the inhabitants of Olympus, not unfrequently of himself, its supreme lord. He resolves accordingly to sweep the heavens of these unworthy deities and hated memorials, and establish in their room those virtues and duties most conducive to the real welfare of humanity. So far, Bruno's conception is symbolical of the general movement we term the Renaissance, indeed it is signified in the very word. Jupiter, the symbol of humanity as well as its creator and ruler, was then undergoing a regenerating process. Older beliefs and convictions, the prolific brood of hierarchical ambition and popular ignorance were being, so far as reformers like Bruno had their way, gradually swept from the firmament of the human intellect. No longer did the ancient incense rise to heaven, no longer were sacrifices offered on the old altars, no longer was worship rendered to the tyrants and despots who had so long enslaved humanity. The millennium of liberty was drawing nigh. The Beast of Dogma once triumphant, but whose triumph had been purchased with the tears and groans of men, was now to be expelled.

[1] *Op. Ital.*, i. p. 5.

This reconstitution of the heavenly constellations[1] is made the subject of these dialogues, and the mode in which it is effected is related with a grotesque mixture of satire and humour which sometimes borders on blasphemy, and with a redundancy of metaphor, simile and allusion which is quite overwhelming. Jupiter proposes his reforms in an animated speech. He does not scruple to reproach his courtiers with their evil examples to men. 'It is you,' he says, 'who have offered to mortals the sight and example of misconduct extending to the most revolting vices. Yes, my friends, to perpetuate our shame we have rendered our dwelling the monument of our crimes. Instead of bestowing immortality on real virtues, on faith, justice and temperance, we have honoured by our preference all errors and villanies. We have consecrated scandals and sins both mortal and venial. What, in short, are the signs of the Zodiac? What are the constellations, but striking evidences of our depravity and abasement?' He suggests an immediate and thorough reform. 'Truth,' he says, 'if we return to her service will break the chains with which error has bound us. Let us then at once repent. Let us cleanse the heavens of every object which may recall our transgressions. Heaven is twofold. It is first within ourselves: let us extirpate our ill tendencies. It is also outside us: let us replace the images and statues which fill our apartments by other paintings and figures of an opposite kind.' The proposal is received with acclamations by the assembled gods and goddesses. A few days after this assembly another is convoked for the purpose of carrying out the resolutions of Olympus.

The actual substitution of new virtues for ancient and venerable falsities gives rise to much discussion of a free sort. The process takes some time, for it involves forty-eight changes. We need not recapitulate what is in effect only a dry list of names. To give an idea of the celestial reformation I will only say that for the Great Bear is substituted truth; for the Dragon, prudence; for Cepheus, wisdom; for Pegasus, poetic inspiration; for the Virgin, chastity;

[1] It is possible that Bruno may have been indebted for his idea of the reformation of the heavens to the similar attempts of Bede and other theologians. They also proposed to change the names and arrangements of the constellations, *e.g.* they put St. Peter in the place of the Ram, St. Andrew instead of the Bull, etc. In more recent calendars David, Solomon, the Magi, and other New and Old Testament characters were placed in the heavens instead of the former constellations. Cf. Flammarion, *Astronomical Myths*, p. 57. But while their proposed reformation was ecclesiastical, Bruno's was philosophical and ethical. Conceding however as obvious the ethical significance of the *Spaccio*, the attempt to extort from it a formal system of moral teaching, such as that made by Dr. Hartung, must be pronounced extremely rash.

for the Balance, equity, etc. The god Momus fittingly discharges the part of the skeptic, who is apparently as indifferent to the qualities of the new possessors as to those of the dispossessed provided only that virtue has her inherent supremacy conceded. For instance, the disposition of the Northern Crown is debated in the assembly. The occasion serves to evoke Bruno's most scathing sarcasm on the immorality of the Church. Minerva thinks that the Crown was intended for some valiant prince, and that Jupiter should assign it to the most deserving. 'Let it remain in heaven,' answers Jupiter, 'until it can become the recompense of an invincible hero who, armed with club and fire, may give to miserable Europe the peace it so earnestly desires, and break the numberless heads of a monster worse than that of Lernea, which diffuses through the veins of that unhappy continent the fatal poison of a heresy possessing a thousand diverse forms.

'It is enough,' rejoins Momus, 'to merit the Crown that this hero should put an end to the cowardly set of pedants who, without doing any good, claim to be reverenced as pious people and pleasing to God; who say that to do good is right, and to do ill is wrong, but whatever good one does, or ill one avoids, one is no worthier nor more agreeable to God; and that in order to become so nothing more is needed than to believe and hope according to their formulæ and their catechism. Was there ever, ye gods! a perversity more manifest?'

'Certainly,' said Mercury, 'he who is not aware of this does not know what villainy means; for this is the mother of all vice. Were we to propound such a rule for men we should be hated worse than death.'

'The worst of it is,' adds Momus, 'that they dishonour us by saying this is the command of the gods; nay, more, they stigmatize moral effects and fruits by entitling them defects and vices. But while they say no one works for them, and they labour for no one (for all their work consists in vilifying the works of others) they nevertheless live by the works of those who have laboured for others as well as for themselves, who have erected for others churches and chapels, hospitals and alms' houses, colleges and universities. They are then, plainly, thieves; they have usurped the goods due to others, *i.e.* to those who are really useful to the state because they give themselves to speculative sciences, to virtuous manners, to the love of the Res publica, to the maintenance of civil and social laws. Whereas if you listen to the former, they are occupied only with things invisible,' etc.

Thus vigorously does Bruno castigate the immoral orthodoxy of Romanism, and the faith without works of Calvinism; thus energetic-

ally does he protest against the dogmatic presumption which both at Rome and Geneva was suffered to override the most obvious and elementary dictates of justice and humanity; and proves that in his earnest struggle for freedom he was by no means indifferent to the claims of morality, or to the requirements of social and political life. As the common bane of these dogmatists is hatred of work and practice, they are finally condemned, on the suggestion of Mercury, to transmigrate into the bodies of asses.

This is but one episode in the long process of the reformation of heaven. Another treats of the necessity of special providence as an attribute of the Infinite. Bruno also insists on his utilitarian basis of religion. The gods, he says, do not ask to be loved or feared except as a benefit to humanity, and to prevent the vices which would otherwise destroy it. Hence religions and churches should be distinguished neither by external symbols nor particular vestments, but by talents and virtues. Like Pomponazzi, Bruno makes no distinction in kind between Christianity and other religions or divine laws. He arraigns one and all at the bar of reason, which is the supreme arbiter of the qualities and excellencies of each. At the same time he is, as we shall find, quite alive to the merits which, on the basis of reason, must be assigned to Christianity. It is impossible to enumerate in this brief sketch the varied points discussed in this remarkable work. The substantial identity of the principle of life in all its many forms is distinctly proclaimed; and the correlated belief in transmigration is also affirmed. Occasionally, too, Bruno's intense passion for freedom seems to assert itself in questionable forms, for he is inclined to pronounce in favour of polygamy as well as to advocate some species of socialism. But we must remember, in reading his works, that his impetuosity and impatience of restraint of every kind, as well as the crude appeal common to him with other free-thinkers of the time, to what appeared natural laws, lead him occasionally to propound as tentative and hasty opinions, ideas which he probably would not have entertained as practical propositions.

I may add that Momus, the representative in the *Spaccio* of the skeptical rationalist, is finally commanded by Jupiter to be silent, and to believe what he cannot comprehend.

The wild guerilla warfare with dogma, superstition and ignorance, which forms the subject matter of the work now considered, is continued in Bruno's *Cabala del Cavallo Pegasco*, which may be regarded as its appendix. This is a treatise on the different species of ignorance or Asinity, whether dogmatic and pedantic, or purely skeptical and unenquiring. It thus resembles Erasmus's well-known *Encomium Moriæ*, and its particular object, like the *De Docta Ignorantia* of

Cardinal de Cusa, is to stimulate men to free and enlightened enquiry. Of all Bruno's writings this appears to me one of the most characteristic. It has not the exuberant and far-reaching imagination, the wild ebullient recklessness of the *Spaccio*, but it possesses that indefinable blending of philosophy and humour, of serious gravity and sardonic mockery, of light pleasantry and bitter sarcasm, which makes our skeptic the Lucian of modern philosophy and his Italian works unique in its Literature. Bruno's position as a moderate skeptic is indicated in this work by his including under the same category of Asinity, the complete negation of the mystic, the unenquiring suspense of the Pyrrhonist, and the devout ignorance of the religionist. It is on the last, as the special epidemic of his age, that his satire and ridicule fall most heavily. He brings together the chief places in the Old and New Testaments, as well as other ancient authors, in which asses are mentioned, and finds the various uses to which the animal has been put, together with its well-known attributes, symbolical of the qualities of its human relatives. His satirical conclusion is that Asinity comprehends the chief human duty. To it is assigned Divine favour, both in this world and in the next. The terrible energy which marks his satire is shown in his conclusion of the Preliminary Declamation, addressed 'to the curious, devout and pious reader,' of which I translate a few sentences:—

'There is not, there is not, I say, a better mirror placed before human eyes than Asinity and the ass; or which demonstrates more clearly the duty of that man who, labouring in the vineyard of the Lord, looks for the reward of the final judgment, the enjoyment of the heavenly supper, the repose which follows this transitory life. No plan is better or even equal to lead, guide and conduct us with all possible convenience to eternal salvation than the power of that true wisdom approved by the Divine voice. On the other hand, nothing is more effective to engulf us in the abyss of Tartarus than philosophical and rational speculations, which born of the senses, grow with the discursive faculty, and ripen in the developed human intellect. Try, try therefore to be asses all ye who are men; and you who are already asses, study, plan and endeavour always to proceed from good to better, so that you may arrive at that end and dignity which is attained, not by knowledge and effort however great, but by faith; and which is lost, not by ignorance and misdoing however enormous, but by unbelief. *If by this conduct* you are found written in the book of life[1] you will obtain grace in the Church militant and

[1] It is on this *reductio ad absurdum* that the stress of Bruno's irony must be regarded as placed. The words in the original are '*Se così vi disporrete, se tali sarete, e talmente vi governarete, vi trovarete scritti nel libro de la vita,*' etc., etc.

glory in the Church triumphant, in which God lives and reigns through all ages. Amen.'[1]

In the same spirit of fierce cynical mockery, he erects Asinity into a saint or goddess,[2] and sings her praises in a sonnet, of which I here attempt a free translation:—

O sainted Asinity. Ignorance most holy!
Stupidity most sacred! Devotion most profound
Thou alone can'st make us learned, good and sound,
While human thought and study are void of value wholly.

Little availeth the search that men so fully
Employ by every art or science-operation,
Little availeth their sky-ward contemplation,
To gain the heavenly seat which is thy object solely.

What boots then, ye curious, your persistent exploration?
The wish to learn the secret of nature's laws and ways,
If the stars be water, earth, or fiery exhalation?
Holy Asinity despises wisdom's rays.

Folded hands and knees form her sole occupation,
Expecting from Providence the luck of better days,
All passes, nothing stays,
Save the fruition of that eternal peace,
Which God will give her after her decease.[3]

If these lines evince a spirit of Mephistophilean mockery, we must remember that the asinine piety, against which Bruno inveighs so vehemently, was that which opposed itself to all culture and enlightenment, as well as to every rational and humane type of religion. In the *sturm und drang* of unwisdom and intolerance which then raged, some justification undoubtedly existed for a violence which at first sight might appear directed against every form of piety without distinction. We are too apt to forget in our reverence for religion, that a conviction

[1] Op. Ital., ii. 264, Ed. Wagner; vol. ii. p. 572, Ed. de Lagarde.

[2] It is possible that this apotheosis of Asinity was suggested to Bruno (it was at least fully justified) by the celebration of asinine virtues that took place during the well-known 'Festival of Fools.' The following verse, *e.g.* is taken from the 'Processional' sung during the march of the ass and its motley attendants to the grand altar in the cathedral of Sens. The irony is as bitter as in Bruno's sonnet:

'Aurum de Arabia
Thus et myrrham de Saba
Tulit in ecclesia
Virtus asinaria.'

See on this subject, Le Bas, *Allemagne*, i. p. 486.

[3] Op. Ital., ii. 257, Ed. Wagner; p. 564, de Lagarde.

just as profound of the sacredness and divine character of his object of worship, may animate the searcher after truth, so that scientific and philosophical enquiry will to him assume the aspect of a grave, imperious, religious duty. This was undoubtedly Bruno's opinion. An opposition to knowledge and intellectual progress, to religious and mental freedom, no matter on what sanctions present or future it was attempted to be based, was nothing else in his eyes but a monstrous perversion of human duty, to be attacked and exposed without hesitation or remorse. These extracts also point out how vigorously Bruno protested against the excessive other-worldliness of the middle ages, when the plea of a future world was put forth to excuse the grossest negligence of duty in this; and when supposed service to God was impiously regarded as a complete exoneration from obvious obligation to man.

But though Bruno is thus severe on religious ignorance, he also lashes the self-satisfied disclaimer of knowledge which marks the acquiescent and negative skeptic—the agnostic of our own day. With his own insatiable eagerness in every species of knowledge-pursuit, he cannot comprehend a point of view which appears to him absolute indifference to all progress and possible attainment. Skeptics therefore are, in this sense, just as much asses as the stolidly ignorant among religious people. Their only distinction is, that they are asses of another species. Thus mystical scepticism or pure negation is a young ass, given to stray and wander. Pyrrhonic skepticism is an ass, like the more famous one of Buridanus, which stands firmly planted between two roads in the most abject perplexity as to which it shall take,[1] while Christian asinity is represented by the ass and colt in the well-known narrative of the Gospels. Bruno is clear-sighted enough to perceive that the skepticism of the mystic, and the voluntary ignorance of the pietist, are really akin. His treatment of Pyrrhonism is, however, both summary and superficial. The utmost he can allege against it is its supposed indifference to progress.[2] Could Bruno have known not only that a disinclination to dogmatize might advance step by step with progressive science, but that the Greek word skeptic denotes especially the persistent enquirer, he

[1] Op. Ital., ii. 272, 'la seconda par un' asina, che sta fitta tra due vie, dal mezzo di quali mai si parte, non possendosi risolvere, per quale de le due più tosto debba muovere i passi.'

[2] Cf. *De Lamp. Comb. Lull.*, Opera Lulli, p. 732, when after speaking of a true confession of ignorance, which is not incompatible with the fullest and most anxious search after truth, he proceeds: 'Mitto eos qui veritatem in densissima caligine consistentem definientes, tunc se maximè cognovisse, et culmen attigisse philosophiæ existimabant cum suam ignorantiam non ignorare sibi viderentur.'

might have found occasion to commend it here, as in effect he does in others of his works.

Besides his criticism of religious and skeptical Asinity, this work also contains some strictures on dogmatic Asinity in the form then most preponderant and obstructive, *viz.* Peripateticism. One of the interlocutors in the conversation is a certain Onorius, whose soul in past times has undergone a variety of transformations. Originally it animated the body of a Theban gardener's ass, next it became the living principle of a horse like Pegasus, and had to labour in the service of Apollo and his court on Mount Parnassus. Afterwards it transmigrated into the body of Aristotle. In this form he set himself up as a reformer of science—an enterprise so much the more easy since Socrates was dead, Plato proscribed, and he alone was left like a one-eyed among the blind. He drew up random reports of the opinions of the ancients in a childish and unworthy language. He taught under the portico of the Lyceum at Athens, styled himself the prince of Peripatetics, etc.

Thus the ass, concludes Bruno, bears sway not only in the schools. Everywhere we see it installed, in courts and tribunals, in churches and chapels, as well as in academies and universities. It invades every career and every occupation of the human mind. One might say that there are more asses among men than men among asses, and that the greater part of mankind are members of the university, citizens of the State of Asinity. The ass resembles that soul of the world which animates and sustains the universe, and which is everywhere important and everywhere worshipped. It is the Triumphant Beast of Dogma in veritable flesh and bone. Hence is explained why the spiritual and moral ass is everywhere as much esteemed as the physical and material ass is appreciated by particular communities. This is why the ideal and cabalistic ass, that animal of all others most noble, the symbol and type of intellectual perfection, deserves to have a place in the sky not far from truth, and to become a constellation.

But though the three works to which I have thus briefly alluded represent Bruno's most free-thinking productions, they by no means exhaust the subject of his skepticism. We have no record of any external impulse or prompting which first started our skeptic on the path of free thought. His early surroundings at Nola and Naples were of a free kind, as we have already observed. But the chief predisposing cause we must probably assign to his own analytical intellect and vigorous imagination combined with the strong independence of character, without which no mental excellencies are of much avail. He seems to have learnt early in life to distrust the powers

of his senses, and to compare the suggestions of imagination with the outcome of his actual experience. When a child, he was accustomed to survey from the humble house of his parents at the foot of Mount Cicala the black top and barren ridge of Vesuvius. To his childish imagination this appeared the final limit of the world, and it seemed impossible that the smoking and burning mountain should be enlivened by trees or fruits. What was his surprise on afterwards visiting the environs of Vesuvius to find the country full of orchards, vineyards and gardens; to use his own words,—

> 'Attonitus novitate meos tunc arguo primum
> Mendaces oculos.'

'Cosi,' says Professor Fiorentino,[1] recounting the anecdote, 'esclamava il poeta e nell' animo giovanile entrava la prima volta il dubbio.' Alas! the disillusionizing that Bruno underwent on that occasion was but the first of a long series of corrections of the imagination by experience, all tending however in a contrary direction to this first dream of childish fancy—not the transmutation of the distant black and arid mountain region into a country of vineyards and gardens, but the shadowy prospect of beauty and fertility changed into actual blackness and barrenness, into smoke and devastating fire. Later in life we find that Bruno did not carry his distrust of sense-impressions to the extreme which characterizes some of his fellow-skeptics. The senses, he thinks, must be confined to their own peculiar jurisdiction: they only inform us of matters within their sphere. They are merely instruments of the understanding. Hence the contradiction assumed to exist between the senses and the reason is only a vain objection of Pyrrhonism. The contradiction is only apparent. When *e.g.* our eyes assure us that the sun moves and the earth is immovable, they bear witness only of what *they see*, and are so far right. But when the eyes of the mind affirm that it is the earth that revolves round the sun, they testify what *they know*, and within their sphere they are also correct. Of course the inference from this reasoning is that sense impressions are unreliable until their evidence is confirmed by the intellect, and therefore the distinction between Bruno and other skeptics is on this point only one of degree. His own tendency to idealistic construction would also have the effect of suggesting a distrust of sense-deliverances. Indeed, his language on this subject is worthy of a disciple of Plato or Plotinos, for he compares sense-perception to an eye surveying from a dark prison the colours and forms of things as if through holes and crannies.[2] This union of

[1] B. Telesio, *ossia studi storici su l'idea della Natura nel Risorgimento Italiano*, vol. ii. p. 49.

[2] 'Sensus est oculus in carcere tenebrarum, rerum colores et superficiem

transcendentalism and skepticism Bruno may have derived from his master, the Cardinal di Cusa, and the author of the work *De Docta Ignorantia*, in whom it forms the leading characteristic. Doubt is therefore, with Bruno, the starting-point of all reasoning, and of all philosophy. This is affirmed again and again in various parts of his works, as well as exemplified in his own career; of which skepticism is the first authentic recorded fact we possess, whatever mystical certainties and Lullian conclusions he attained in after life. However much the abstractions of the Infinite and the One satisfied for the time his intellect, and soothed his emotional needs, there was a prior stage of doubt, and doubt of a sweeping and comprehensive character. He who wishes to philosophize, says Bruno, must begin by doubting of all things.[1] Nay, he must continue in this path, for destruction must go hand in hand with construction, analysis with synthesis; at least until reason, the free light from heaven, sees her path clear and open before her. But this undoubted prerogative of reason to be the higher tribunal for the adjudication of truth must not be taken to imply that all her apparent dictates and judgments must be accepted without reservation. For oftentimes they may be the result of bias or imperfect information, or an undue stress on a merely external authority. They can only be accepted as indisputably true when each rational judgment is consistent, both with itself and with other things which stand in correlation with it.[2] Still, with all his large distrust of sense perceptions, and his more qualified distrust of reason, Bruno was by no means a complete skeptic. His doubt, like that of Descartes and so many others, is but the requisite preliminary to conviction. What his opinion of Pyrrhonism, regarding it as immovable suspense, was, we have already seen; so defined it was a mere tissue of puerilities worthy of a place in the same category with the philosopher's stone and the quadrature of the circle. Although truth was hard to come by, he did not doubt (on *a priori* grounds), either the possibility of finding it or its reality when found. He did not distrust the human mind considered apart from its false methods and unworthy prepossessions. In its origin it was divine; in its nature and tendencies, it was part of the Infinite itself;

veluti per cancellos et foramina, prospiciens, Ratio tanquam per fenestram lumen a sole derivans, et ad solem repercussum, quemadmodum in corpore lunæ speculatur.'—*De Triplici Minimo*, Frankfort, 1581, p. 7.

[1] 'Qui philosophari concupiscit, de omnibus principio dubitans non prius de altera contradictionis parte definiat quam altercantes audierit,' etc.—*De Triplici Minimo*, p. 8.

[2] 'Non ex auditu, fama, multitudine, longævitate, titulis et ornatu, sed de constantis sibi atque rebus doctrinæ vigore, sed de rationis lumine veritate inspicua judicet et definiat.'—*De Trip. Min.*, p. 8.

therefore, in its own uncorrupted instincts and yearnings, in its own unbiassed judgments and wise determinations, it was the veritable home of truth. I need not add that, like that of all idealists, Bruno's final conception of truth makes it a pure intuitional and personal entity, though allied with and forming part of the universal and infinite truth which embraces all others as the whole comprehends its parts. The goal at which he arrives is therefore faith, not that of tradition and external authority, which he stigmatizes as that most vile habit of credulity (vilissima consuetudo credendi), but the personal conviction which comes of the full and free exercise of a man's own intellect.

But the real extent and significance of Bruno's methodical skepticism we shall only be able adequately to appreciate by a cursory glance at his systematic thought.

Although I agree in the ordinary estimate which connects Bruno's Idealism with Copernicus's Astronomy, I think it is easy to exaggerate the influence he thence derived. Under any hypothesis of the relation of earth and heavens, Bruno must have excogitated a mode of thought whose tendencies would be towards the Infinite. Common intellects, with suggestions of infinity on every side, are only conscious of limitation. Others, placed in the narrowest environment will infer even from surroundings so unfavourable the absolute and unbounded. Had Bruno been born and brought up in a prison cell he would have deduced infinity from his narrow confines. The innate vigour of his imagination, and his impatience of all restraints, would have rendered any ideal limits short of the illimitable insufferably tedious and oppressive. But this being granted, we may allow that his metaphysical interpretation of Nature, first suggested perhaps by the inexhaustible fulness and extent of mere terrestrial phenomena, received a firm foundation and renewed stimulus from Copernicus's discoveries. As Bartholmèss well notes, his theology might afterwards be called by the title of Derham's Book, 'Astro-Theology.' The main article of his creed was a primary and immediate inference from the new astronomy, *i.e.* The Infinite. This was the point of view from which he contemplated everything, heaven, earth, humanity, religion. This was the standard by which he assessed their value, the approximation to which constituted the measure of their truth and validity. When the conviction burst on him that truth, religion and morality had their roots in the Infinite and Eternal, when he began to weary of the limits of earth,—the bounded and partial character of the traditional verities most widely embraced by his fellow-men,—when he stretched forth the wings of imagination and spiritual yearning to worlds which filled the measureless expanse above him and in comparison with which our

globe is but a tiny speck, we are not told, but he describes the event as comparable to the escape of a man from prison. These are his words:—

'Away from the prison-cell narrow and gloomy,
Where so many years error closely hath bound me,
Leaving the fetters and chains which around me
My foe's cruel hand hath entwined to entomb me.'

And in other lines, which we may accept as his own description of his mental career, he says:—

'Securely to the air my pinions I extend,
—Fearless of all barriers feigned by men of old
The heavens I freely cleave—to the Infinite I tend.

'So leaving this, to other worlds my upward flight I wend,
Æthereal fields I penetrate, with dauntless heart and bold
And leave behind what others deem, a prospect without end.'[1]

As Bruno thus inferred the Infinite from Nature, especially in the larger acceptation which modern astronomy had imparted to the term, so the qualities with which he endued it were similarly derived from the contents of Nature's boundlessness and variety. Chiefest among these was the Union of Contraries. This is in truth, the key to Bruno's system. In its very idea the Infinite will be complex and differentiated, not simple and uniform. This complexity Bruno discerned everywhere. It was the common attribute both of mind and matter, the chief quality of the primary substance underlying both. Discernible in the Infinite of Nature, it also characterized the Infinite of human reason. What to some thinkers might seem contradictions and antagonisms mutually destructive of each other, he regarded only as different musical notes, which combined make up a broad and rich harmony (symphonia). In everything existed its own contrary which its development must inevitably generate and bring into clear and obvious manifestation. There is therefore, as you may observe, a close approximation in Bruno's idealism to modern German transcendentalism, which accounts for the peculiar fascination he exercised on all its great luminaries from Jacobi to Hegel.[2]

[1] '. . . L' alè sicure a l' aria porgo
Nè temo intoppo di cristallo o vetro
Ma fendo i cieli, e a l' Infinito m' ergo
E mentre dal mio globo agli altri sorgo
E per l' etereo campo oltre penetro
Quel ch' altri lungi vede, lascio al tergo.'

[2] This aspect of Bruno's teaching has been so often commented on, both by his biographers and by historians of philosophy, that it seems needless to give

It is instructive to observe how this composite nature of the Infinite falls in with Bruno's skepticism. The apparent warfare of varying principles and laws in Nature,[1] the progress by antagonism, is only the outward reflexion of the divine motions and impulses, doubts and opinions he found within his own being. By means of this perpetual differentiation no wise man is satisfied with a static or immoveable condition. The more vigorous his intellectual development, the more conscious is he of the conflict of contradictions of which it consists, the less disturbed by the contemplation of their adverse relations, and the more skill and experience does he acquire in neutralizing their varying aspects by merging them in wider generalizations. Man in a state of ignorance has no perception of contrariety,[2] a fact which is signified by the prominent part which division occupies in every system of logic, and which is symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Hence also it comes that ignorance is the mother of sensual felicity; and that, as Solomon says, 'He that increaseth wisdom increaseth sorrow.'

Another correlative form of the idea of Infinity, Bruno denotes by the metaphysical concept of the One. Like the early Greek thinkers, he proclaimed as the issue of his investigations, 'The whole is one.' 'Oneness,' verified the term of existence, as 'the Infinite' characterized its immeasurable variety and extent, as 'the Absolute,' concluded all its limitations and conditions. Here again the thought was suggested by Bruno's Nature-investigations in combination with his powerful imagination. The convergence of multifarious natural operations in the production of a single result is a fact frequently dwelt upon by evidential theology as a proof of the one mind or will which governs the universe. Bruno does not directly employ the argument for monotheistic purposes, though indirectly his reasoning points in the same direction. Oneness, like the Infinite, the Absolute, is merely a final term of his philosophy, the goal of his speculations. By its means he is able to overcome incongruities in the history of philo-

a list of such authorities, most of which are easily accessible. Carrière has some useful remarks on the subject in his *Philosophische Weltanschauung*, etc., p. 470, etc., etc. See also Brunhofer's G. Bruno's *Weltanschauung*, pp. 151–154.

[1] Op. Ital., i. p. 276.

[2] Comp. Spaventa (Professor), *Saggi di critica*, etc., vol. i., Napoli, 1867. 'Per la composizione della cose avviene, che nessuno si appaga del suo stato, eccetto qualche insensato e stolto, il quale ha poca o nulla apprensione del suo male; gode l' essere presente senza temer del futuro, gioisce di quel che è e per quello in che si trova e non rimorso o cura di quel che è o può essere; e in fine non ha senso della contrarieta, la quale è figurata per l'albero della scienza del bene e del male.'—P. 184.

sophy, as well as to harmonize dissonances in the investigation of Nature. Preceding philosophers as, *e.g.* Aristotle, had asserted the operation of diverse general principles; as for instance, form and matter, and left them as unreconciled discrepancies in the universe.[1] Bruno felt himself compelled to find a concept, or generalization, capable of embracing both. In this higher stage of thought, matter and form, cause and principle (*i.e.* according to Bruno the extraneous and inherent cause) are completely identical. Hence the knowledge of that supreme unity is the object of all philosophy, and of every true science of Nature. He describes the extent, power and excellence of the Oneness in the enthusiastic terms which he lavishes on all his ideal abstractions:[2]—

'There is only one absolute possibility, one only reality, one only activity. Whether it be form or soul, matter or body, it is but one—one only Being, one sole existence. Unity is therefore perfection, its character is impossibility of being comprehended, in other words to possess neither limit, bound, nor definitive determination. The One is infinite and immense, and therefore immoveable; it cannot change its place, because outside of it there is no space; it is not engendered, because all existence is only its own existence; it cannot perish, because it can neither pass into nor transform itself into anything else. It cannot increase nor diminish, because the Infinite is susceptible neither of augmentation nor of diminution. It is liable to alteration neither from without, because nothing exists outside of it, nor from within, because it is at once and the same time everything it can become. Its harmony is an eternal harmony since it is unity itself. . . . Because it is self-identical, it cannot form two beings; it has not two kinds of existence, because it has not two modes of being; it has not different parts, for it is not composite. It is in the same manner, the whole and parts, all and one, limited and unlimited, formal and informal, matter and void, animate and inanimate. . . . In the universe, solid body does not differ from a mathematical point, nor the centre from the circumference, nor the finite from the infinite, nor the infinitely great from the infinitely little. The Universe is only a centre, or rather its centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere. We therefore do well to say that Jupiter fills all things, remains in each part of the world, is the centre of every being, one in the whole and by whom all is one. Individuals who continually change do not assume a new existence, but only another mode of being; they are all they can be, but not all in reality and at one time. The disposition of matter for example

[1] Cf. Fiorentino, *B. Telesio*, etc., vol. ii. p. 64.

[2] See *De La Causa Principio et Uno* (Op. Ital., ii. p. 261, etc.) passim.

which determines the form of a horse cannot determine at the same time the form of a man or of a plant. But all individuals, though in different ways, participate in one and the same being. The universe, on the other hand, comprises not only all beings, but all modes of being; it is, it comprehends, all modification of the substance which in itself remains always the same. It is in this sense that Solomon has said, "There is nothing new under the sun." '

The Absolute is another favourite abstraction by which Bruno endeavours to express a totality of being which is opposed to every limit, and which excludes every particular or individual characteristic. Though applied sometimes to the supreme energy dominating Nature, Bruno generally employs it of the unconditional Being of God, which makes the ascription of names, definitions and attributes, as conceptions or entities external to His Being, almost an act of impiety.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that these abstractions, though they form final determinations in Bruno's creed, were held by him as articles of belief within the limits of his knowledge or reason. They merely indicated tendencies pointing in the direction of truth, the truth itself being both unattainable and incomprehensible. That he found not only complete satisfaction in them as such, but contemplated their excellencies with a fervent enthusiasm he can scarce find words to express, assimilates therefore his position to that of so many skeptics who, distrustful of attaining truth, still persist in searching for it. If therefore Bruno found rest in his Idealism it was not the death-like repose of the dogmatist, it partook rather of the placidly energising ataraxia of the skeptic. Indeed, complete idealism can never be more than a condition of unstable equilibrium.

> 'The mental rest or peace won from
> The cold and formless absolute,'

will generally be as devoid of vital warmth and definite form as itself, nor can it well be otherwise; for however carefully we construct our idealization, however complete appears the series of abstractions by which we ascend to the Infinite or Absolute, however diligently we merge like Bruno all contradictions and incongruities in the unifying concept of the One, or going to the extreme conclusion —the vanishing point of idealism, however determinately we assert the identity of thought and being, there will always lurk a suspicion that our processes are not so irrefragable as we would willingly believe them. Nominalism will perhaps suggest that we have been performing an ingenious *hocus pocus*, and deluding ourselves with inane and barren verbosities. Experience will obtrude the possi-

bility that thought and being are not altogether identical, and that the mental condition which affirms the identity is more or less artificial and unreal; at least there will occur an occasional distrust of conclusions which, however valuable or convenient, stand so far aloof from the petty affairs, the sensible restrictions, the ordinary attitude of mind in which the daily life of most of us is passed. In other words, there will occur a philosophical counterpart to the religious conflict described by St. Paul, in which 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.' The degree of strength and coherence which metaphysical abstractions possess depends mainly on the vigour of imagination employed in their excogitation. Hence every scheme of transcendentalism contains in itself germs of skepticism, possibly destined sooner or later to come to ripeness. This truth is amply attested both by individual cases, and by the cycles, and reactions, observable in the history of philosophy. Bruno again and again confesses that his abstractions are incomprehensible. We cannot tell what the Infinite is in itself, we can only discern how the different aspects and modes of the Finite seem to converge like the different radii of an illimitable circle in the Infinite. The One is equally unknowable; all our experience being related to the complexity and variety of which it is composed. As to the Absolute, to attempt to attain it were as fatuous as to run round the circumference of a circle in order to find the centre.[1] 'Our reason,' he says, 'is incapable of comprehending that faculty which is at the same time absolutely active and absolutely passive, it cannot conceive how one thing may be all, nor how, as ultimate Reality, it is all. All our knowledge reposes on analogies and relations; and cannot apply itself except in a tentative and imperfect manner, to what is incomparable, immeasurable and unique. We have no eye for a light so high, for an abyss so profound; and Holy Scripture joining the two extremes, says sublimely: The darkness is no darkness to Thee, but the night is as clear as the day. The darkness and light to Thee are both alike.'[2]

On the other hand, whatever may be said of the danger pertaining to metaphysical abstractions—especially as tending to generate vagueness of conception, a disposition to accept words for things, etc., I do not think any philosophic mind would question their imperative character as universal concepts, or would deny their special usefulness in the case of intellects like Bruno's. Brought forcefully into contact with the antinomies of the universe, finding them in his speculations, whether as objective discrepancies forcing themselves on his consciousness from without, or as contradictions evolved subjectively

[1] Op. Ital., ii. p. 343. Comp. Fiorentino, *B. Telesio*, ii. p. 60.
[2] Op. Ital., i. p. 263. Bartholmèss, ii. p. 140.

by the natural operations of his own intellect,—coming in contact with them in religion, in politics, in social life—it was surely advantageous to find, or at any rate assume, a centre in which all these various differences finally converged; to discover a metaphysical ark which might carry him safely over the boisterous waves and conflicting currents of human beliefs and opinions. In the Infinite, the Absolute, and the One, as into the measureless ocean wherein the numberless myriads of rivers and streams in every country and from every direction are finally absorbed and lost, he was able to concentrate the different attributes of Deity, the varying aspects of Nature, the manifold and diverse conclusions of the human reason. Here Liberty and Necessity abandoned their ancient enmity and became reconciled. Here divine justice and mercy, immutable law and personal volition, became united. Here evil was no longer the irreconcilable opponent of good; it was rather its privation, or possibly its necessary complement. Here the Finite was not the contradiction, but a part, infinitesimal though it might be, of the Infinite. The space occupied by a single human being or the insect crawling at his feet, formed a portion of Immensity. The smallest division of time was an indissoluble fraction of eternity.[1] In a word, the temple of the Infinite, with Bruno for its high priest, witnessed the union of many metaphysical and ethical couples which at first sight might seem, if not wholly incompatible, at least very ill-assorted.

But leaving these abstractions it is time to enquire what are the exact relations they bear (1) to God, (2) to Nature.

As to the first, they are merely designations of the Supreme Being. They serve to express not so much His attributes as His essence—His only conceivable existence. He alone is the Infinite, the One, and the Absolute—the universal existence filling all space and all time, manifesting itself in all motion, life and activity—the cause, principle and sustainer of Nature, nay the spiritual expression or definition of Nature itself. In theology, as in philosophy and physical science, Bruno's conceptions are all infinite, illimitable. A personal Deity extramundane and apart from Nature, he could not understand. All the attributes of Deity in his *Theodicee* are as infinite and comprehensive as Deity itself—nay, they are only varying aspects—denominations of the self-same universal Essence.

It was because the ordinary definition of the Trinity involved the idea of division in the one indissoluble unity of God, that Bruno refused to accept it in that sense, and adopted a more metaphysical method of explaining it. 'The supreme Being is the substance of the universe, the pure essence of all life and reality, the source of all

[1] Comp. Bartholmèss, ii. 354.

being, the force of all forces, the virtue of all virtues. . . . If Nature is the outward originating cause of all existence, Divinity is its deeper foundation, and the more profound basis both of Nature and of each individual.[1] God being the cause of all causes, the ruling principle of all existence, may become everything, being also perfect He is everything. In Him existence and power, reality and activity, are inseparably united, indeed they cannot be conceived separately and apart from Him. Not only is He alone the external cause of all things, He is also the inherent principle which maintains them in life. By means of His omnipresence and His boundless activity the existence and motion of all beings constitute but one sole life, one immense and inexhaustible reality. The cause of all causation, the supreme Being is at once the formal, material, efficient and final cause of all that exists. He is the Nature of all Nature.[2] Being thus the universal cause and in perpetual action, He is the universal reason, in other words, the intelligence which conceives all and produces all. Being also the universal power—that which determines and differentiates everything the world contains—the Supreme Being is the soul of the world, the spirit of the universe, the hidden life of every form of existence. The infinity of God, His presence and activity in every part of creation, as well as in its immeasurable totality, His omnipresence and persistent energy constitute the most wonderful character of His Being. To be in all things, and not above or outside of all, this is His exclusive privilege. It is impossible that essence should be above or outside of Being, that Nature should be superior or external to natural things; that goodness and unity should be divorced from the Good and the One. Now the Being of Beings constitutes clearly the essence, the nature, the goodness, the unity of all beings. The presence and the influence of God in His vast empire are shown by the beauty and perfection of the world. This perfection consists in the fact that all possible forms throughout creation attain actual existence and fulfil their proper destiny. From the infinitely varied modes in which the Divine unity is presented in creation, we must not conclude, that in Himself, He is not one and absolutely simple. It is rather by means of this indivisibility, this identity with Himself, that He forms part of all created things. It is because He does not Himself cease to exist, that existence enjoys perpetuity and life.

[1] 'Profundius naturæ uniuscujusque fundamentum est Deus.'—Op. Lat., p. 473. Comp. Op. Ital., i. p. 130.

[2] 'Natura naturans. Deus in rebus, in creaturis expressus'—'in Natura ex vi mentis ordinatricis.'—Op. Lat., p. 47.

'Mens super omnia Deus est, Mens insita omnibus Natura, Mens omnia pervadens ratio.'—*De triplici Min.*, p. 7.

The unity, identity and simplicity of the Supreme Being is blended with His truth and His goodness. His truth is of such a nature, that if it did not exist nothing would be true. The nearer any being approximates to the Infinite the more truth he has. The same rule holds good of his goodness, whether moral or natural. Everything good that Nature possesses comes from God. Whatsoever is good morally and spiritually has been inspired or established by God. God is the legislator of the physical and moral law of the universe because He is the author of all the principles which control both force and intelligence. By virtue of His truth and goodness God is more than the Creator of the world—He is its judge and its benefactor.

His wisdom and knowledge are not less than His truth and goodness. Not only does He behold all things, but He makes all visible things to be seen. He is therefore both the eye which discerns all things, and the light which illumines all eyes and all objects. Here Bruno touches the philosophy both of Malebranche and Berkeley, and gives expression to one of the profound thoughts of the Old Testament, 'In Thy light shall we see light.'

The will of God, *i.e.* His providence, which is inseparable from His prescience, conducts and directs all thoughts to the best possible end. The will of a Being who is almighty and omniscient triumphs over all things. One effect of the Divine will is the revelation of it we have in Nature. Other effects are the beauty and harmony which mark creation. By its very perfection the will of God is at once necessity and absolute liberty, in the same way that in every moral man liberty and necessity are identical.[1] Thus the essence of God comprehends all things, without itself being capable of being comprehended. It includes all duration and all space. It is the end and term of all things. It is both at the base and the summit of the scale of beings without the power of self-definition or determination. The source and plenitude of all perfections, He cannot be adequately conceived by beings as imperfect as ourselves. God cannot properly be named; or rather, He ought to receive every name which can express supreme grandeur and superiority. The designation most suitable to Him is 'the Being of Beings.' God is 'He who is,' or 'That which is' (qui est vel quod est), a possible reminiscence, it may be added, of the 'I am that I am' of the third chapter of Exodus.

As God is the theological expression of the Infinite and the One, so the concrete form of these abstractions is found in Nature. Nature was Bruno's school from which he drew his physics and metaphysics: his conclusions from the seen, and his speculations on the unseen. From its extent, especially as revealed by the new astronomy, he

[1] Comp. *Spaventa*, op. cit., p. 145.

inferred the Infinite. From the universality and variety of its activity he deduced the immanence and omnipresence of Divine energy. From the unity of design pervading its multifarious operations, from the oneness and identity of the substance which assumed so many forms, he concluded the oneness of its Author. Nature was therefore regarded by him as the incarnation or materialization of the Divine Being. To Bruno, as to Raymund of Sabieude, it was, in its own province, a complete Revelation, the first unfolding of the Divine mind. Not only does it reveal its Creator, but it is the only mode by which His existence and attributes can become manifest to men. It is in and by Nature that God recognizes His own being and perfection, and by the same means only are we able to comprehend Him. It should be added that Bruno is not always consistent in his metaphysical interpretation of Nature; sometimes he employs the transcendentalism of the Neo-Platonists, according to which God may be conceived without Nature, though Nature is inconceivable without God. At other times, and most generally, he adopts the pure naturalism of Spinoza, which limits the divinity by the bounds of actual existence. But whatever the point of view, Bruno is an ardent worshipper of Nature. In this respect he yields to none of the votaries of naturalism that belong to the Renaissance. He describes her charms in the amorous language a passionate lover might employ of his mistress. Professor Fiorentino[1] is so affected by Bruno's ardour that he appears ready to share it: 'Questá vaga donna, bella, nuda, schietta raggiante, amorosa, carezzovole è la philosophia per Giordano Bruno, qual meraviglia s' ei se ne sente profondamente innamorato?' But it is not Nature in her static, materialistic aspects with which Bruno is enamoured. In that sense indeed she had for him no existence. It is Nature, moving, energizing, fluctuating, changing, instinct with life and energy, that is the object of Bruno's adoration. This was the 'Anima Mundi,' or Nature-soul, which as we have seen he identified with the third person of the Trinity. For if on the one hand Nature is an instrument of Divine Providence, she is also a living power, a creative faculty standing in the same relation to inert matter as a sculptor does to his marble, or a painter to his canvas. Hence the visible creation is only an image, an idôlon of that incomprehensible spirit which fills and animates all things. Bruno thus shares with his compatriots Telesio, Vanini and Campanella the idea of Nature as a colossal animal, a living being of infinite extent and most elaborate organization, which engenders and nourishes, and in turn destroys and devours, all subordinate beings—the common source of life and of death and of every other movement and energy in creation.

[1] *B. Telesio*, op. cit., p. 48.

Such is Nature in her totality grasped, as Bruno loved to grasp all such concepts, from the point of view of the Infinite. What Nature is in detail in the relation of single parts to the enormous and composite whole he tells us in his *Doctrine of Monads.* These spiritual atoms stand in the same relation to the Infinite as a material atom stands to the physical universe. They constitute principles of continuity which underlie all transitory existence—the minute indestructible bases on which all individual beings are founded, and of which they are so many superstructures and developments. The monad is the centre of all activity in living beings, and of mere existence in inanimate things. Without itself possessing those attributes, it is the basis of everything that has movement, figure or extension. By its self-multiplication and division, by its countlessly diverse co-ordinations and associations, it becomes the actual cause of all the varied processes and phenomena we see in Nature. The analogy on which Bruno founds and by which he explains his Monad Theory is the property of Numbers.[1] The unit must needs enter into every possible combination of number, as its initial basis, its final constituent and its absolute measure. Similarly into all the different products of Nature, endlessly various as they are, enters the monad as the eternal unit of each. All beings, in whatever scale of existence, are only different aggregates of monads, and all natural processes, simple or complex, are only varied transformations and modifications of these primary units, just as all the operations of arithmetic start from the numerical unit. There will of course be a hierarchy among monads as in numbers. Highly endowed and complex beings such as man will consist of a far greater number of monads than beings of a lower order. Every species of being may be represented by its own lowest determination, which thereby becomes its own special monad, just as in arithmetic the number ten is taken as the basis or unit of the decimal system. Throughout the whole of creation, entering into every process and every form of existence, runs this chain of monads, as a permanent and living principle, ultimately ending where it begins with the Supreme Being.

The root-thought of Bruno's monad-speculations is easily perceived. He makes the law and order of numbers subserve the same purpose in his scheme of philosophy as Spinoza's universal substance does in his own system; the same office in point of fact which numbers have continually discharged in the history of philosophy from the time of Pythagoras downwards. It is his principle of cohesion and

[1] 'Numerus est accidens monadis, et monas est essentia numeri: sic compositio accidit atomo, et atomus est essentia compositi,' etc.—*De Trip. Mai.*, etc., p. 10.

uniformity applied to the details of nature-products and processes: hence it is only a crude mode of explaining such truths as are expressed by the correlation and conservation of forces, the perpetuity of energy, the laws of causation, gravitation, chemical affinity, and other formulas of the same kind with which modern science abounds. Perhaps we may go even further, and may regard the return to atoms and molecules which distinguishes some departments of modern thought, as a reproduction to a certain extent of such theories as Bruno's monads; nor is it difficult to foresee that a still greater scope for speculations of a similar kind will inevitably mark the science of the future. The actual practical value of Bruno's theories is of course *nil*; but the monads both of his own philosophy and that of Leibnitz, their descendants, will always retain historical interest, as connecting the speculations of Demokritus and the Greek atomists with those of scientists of our own day.

But, besides the order of natural processes, Bruno's monads help to explain, at least to illustrate, the unifying or merging all contrarieties in an absolute oneness. Just as infinite number comprehends every conceivable numerical quantity, no matter how divergent from each other, so does the One include and involve every imaginable discrepancy and contradiction; however great their mutual differences. By this means, as we have observed, Nature loses all her antinomies; corruption and production, progress and regress, death and life, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, perfection and imperfection, form component elements, unit-sums of varying amounts, of the same absolute innumerable whole. As also all numbers form a series leading from one to infinity, so do the processes of Nature, in harmony with our own instincts, tend towards the Infinite: Bruno's conception thus harmonizing with St. Paul's words, 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.'

That these speculations point in the direction of Pantheism is clear; but that Bruno was an undoubted Pantheist is not so obvious. Nothing is easier than to discover in the ideas of comprehensive and imaginative thinkers when applied to the infinitive existence and omnipresent energy of the Supreme Being, traces of Pantheism; as we have already noticed. Bruno's metaphysical intellect and poetic imagination rendered him peculiarly liable to excesses of this kind. The very attempt to set bounds to the Infinite, to bring it, in other words, within the limits of our own narrow and finite existence, would have seemed to him both false and impious,—false as contravening the witness afforded by Nature of its Author's infinity; impious as placing a limit, for our personal convenience, to the illimitable. Hence many are the passages in his works in which he seems to confound the

Creator with His creation—the material with the efficient cause—the living force with its physical manifestation. In the same general direction of Pantheism point also his views of the necessity of creation, his definition of the Creator as 'Naturizing nature' (natura naturans), his doctrine of monads, and of the 'Anima mundi.' On the other hand must be taken into account the mode in which he frequently describes the Deity as possessing a separate Being and personality, distinct from the universe of His creation, terming him the Creator, the mind and orderer of all things. On a complete view of the question, we may pronounce the evidence for Bruno's Pantheism doubtful, and this is the conclusion to which the most impartial of his biographers and critics have also arrived.

But though I admit Bruno's Pantheistic leanings, and his frequently expressed affection for the Divine which exists in Nature, neither this nor the cognate abstractions of the Infinite and Absolute, so far as they express definite and final attainment, are the supreme objects of his passionate love. Of all of these he admits the inherent incomprehensibility. Like Lessing, he prefers search for truth to discovered truth; or as he is a poet almost more than a philosopher, we may compare him to Sir John Suckling and his preference for desire as superior to fruition. In this respect Bruno is, as I have already hinted, a complete skeptic; as one who loves and searches for what he is aware he cannot attain. Bruno's mistress, like that of so many platonizing thinkers, is 'intellectual Beauty'—the passion rather than its object, or the passion transformed and elevated to an object.[1] He describes her charms with an ardent tenderness and ecstatic rapture which a material and human object of passion could hardly have inspired. The work in which he does this is called *Gli eroici furori*, and we may take it, I think, as a philosophical 'sursum corda'! the point where his idealism becomes sublimated and consecrated into a cultus. M. Bartholmèss has well observed how Bruno attempted in this work to bring about a revolution in Italian ideas respecting love. The poetry of the Troubadours, of Dante and Petrarca, had, while eliminating, or at least refining, the more sensual elements of the earthly passion, exalted it to an extravagant and absurd excess. Treading in the steps of Plato and Plotinus, Bruno wished to divert the sentiment in another direction, and to another object—not the human form, with its attributes of perishableness and mortality, ought to be the object of the wise man's affections; but divine beauty and spiritual wisdom, which is invisible, unchangeable, and imperishable, nay, which is but one aspect of God Himself.

[1] See this especially brought out in the commentary to his *De Immenso*: Works, national edition, vol. i. p. 203.

Dearer than any earthly mistress to the impassioned lover ought to be Divine wisdom to the thinker. Not that he can expect to gain full possession of the object of his passion. He is aware that his knowledge, his powers, are finite, though his desires may be infinite. Sofia, like truth, is to be courted and pursued, never fully achieved. Still some progress may be made by the earnest lover: there are degrees of even infinity and corresponding powers of those who pursue it. Man pursuing Divine wisdom can approximate to what he cannot reach. Though he cannot fully apprehend God, he can gradually become more God-like; though he cannot grasp truth, he can become truthful; though he may not possess supreme wisdom, he may become wiser. Thus the career of the intellectual man becomes an enthusiasm of devotion; an appetite, a longing, a perpetual yearning and striving for Divine wisdom; and Bruno employs all the images and parables of spiritual and mystic longing he can find in holy writ or elsewhere to illustrate the power and sublimity of his sacred propension. We may here observe that Bruno, like Pascal and Hirnhaym passes, at least he evinces a strong desire to pass, from skepticism to mysticism, from the attitude of the searcher to the ecstatic rapture of the intuitionist. It is indeed evident that this was the direction which his intellect had come to take during the latter part of his life; and which his Lullian tendencies so clearly exemplify; though I do not think it correct to say with Ritter, that Bruno passes through skepticism and enquiry into religious faith, in the common acceptation of the term. On the other hand, the point of importance in Bruno's mystic tendencies, and in his devotion to supreme wisdom, is that he thereby finds an object of worship which is not divorced from human reason and enquiry; and therefore different from the common faith both of Catholics and Protestants. A religious Belief and worship into which reason did not enter as its primary constituent, which did not embrace to the fullest extent the results of human learning and investigation, was one Bruno could not understand. We have already noticed the bitter contempt he displays for the holy Asinity, which in his opinion had seduced mankind, and withdrawn them from their true allegiance to the God of wisdom and truth. The enthusiastic adoration of Sophia (wisdom) formed the opposite pole in his religious philosophy to Ass-worship. The Infinite he learnt to adore in the sublime temple of Nature, whose holy of holies it occupied with its awful and illimitable presence; and he bestowed upon it all the powers of his reason and intelligence, as well as the love and worship of his religious sentiment.

Reading Bruno's *Eroici furori*, one is forcibly reminded of Schleiermacher's glowing description of Spinoza as a 'God-intoxicated man':

'Ihn durchdrang der hohe Weltgeist; das Unendliche war sein Anfang und sein Ende, das Universum seine einzige und ewige Liebe; in heiliger Unschuld und tiefer Demuth spiegelte er sich in der ewiger Welt: Voller Religion war er und voll heiligen Geistes; und darum steht er auch da allein und unereicht, Meister in seiner Kunst, aber erhaben über die profane Zunft, ohne Jünger und ohne Bürgerrecht!' With a trifling modification of one or two terms, this magnificent eulogy is as applicable to Bruno as to Spinoza. Indeed, of the two I think the author of *Gli eroici furori* is a few stages further advanced in God-intoxication than even Spinoza. That a man capable of conceiving such a noble and elevated object for human affections, of being permeated by such a divine passion,[1] should have actually suffered death as an atheist, must be pronounced one of the most monstrous perversions of justice which defile the pages of history. Unhappily, it is not a solitary instance of the irony which occasionally overrules human destinies, and with diabolical humour prescribes slavery as the lot of lovers of liberty, compulsory falsehood or the stake as the destiny of lovers of truth; as well as persecution and death as an atheist for the God-intoxicated enthusiast.[2]

The relation which Bruno's idealism bears to his free-thought, and his vehement vindication of the rights of the human conscience, both public and private, is a distinguishing feature of his speculations. Man's reason being an integral part of the universal reason, partakes also of its qualities; it is therefore both necessary and absolute. As such it forms the true basis both of morality and of speculative freedom. Bruno thus anticipates Descartes in laying stress on the reason, or consciousness, as the supreme principle of knowledge. Both reason as the intellectual, and conscience as the ethical, organ of truth are free and autonomous, partaking as they do of the unrestricted liberty of their Creator. Indeed, the knower and the thing known do not exist, except so far as God knows them. All clearness, all evidence emanates from Him. Senses, conscience, reflexion, reason, all the modes and stages of intelligence, the different branches of knowledge, all the efforts of mind and of wisdom, need that divine

[1] Few things in Bruno's works are more remarkable than the depth and sincerity of his God-passion. The title which next to Philosophus he most affected is Theophilus (lover of God). From his point of view no doubt the terms are synonymous.

[2] 'Bruno è stato bruciato vivo a Roma come sprezzatore della religione e di Dio. Oramai sappiamo che cosa importano questo accuse, e possiamo dire anche noi con tutta ragione. "*Eh! Prole dolor! res eo jam pervenit ut qui asserte fatentur, se Dei ideam non habere, et Deum non nisi per res creatas (quarum causas ignorant) cognoscere, non erubescant philosophos atheismi accusare.*"'—Spaventa, *Saggi*, p. 167, quoting Spinoza, *Tract. Theo. Pol.*, om op., ii. p. 32.

light, which, itself inaccessible like the sun, still irradiates all objects within its luminous sphere. It is because every perception, every knowledge, whether of the senses or the mind, has God for its first source, for its principal organ, that man ought to rely implicitly upon verifiable evidence. God does not deceive, nor can He be deceived. He cannot deceive because he is unable to will deception, His will being as perfect as His knowledge. Truth therefore, so far as attainable, is manifested by enquiry and research; and all reasonable methods of pursuing it are to be followed freely and fearlessly, with the conviction that whatever deficiency may arise from the inevitable limitations of our senses and knowledge, is not to be compared with the dense ignorance which must result from their entire disuse.

Bruno therefore concludes that the human mind, by its native instincts and operations, is made for knowledge and for freedom. No bounds indeed can be rightly placed to the speculative and imaginative powers of man. In this respect the microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm, sharing its most peculiar attribute of infinity. Hence any repression of research is an indignity offered, through man, to the Highest Reason which he shares. He lays it down that *thought*, by its own free spiritual nature, cannot be the object of punitive justice; for if sincere it can be no offence to God or to human law. Thus personal, and in a considerable degree, political freedom, is the outcome, the dictate, of his own mental constitution. The limitless character of his thoughts and speculations he transferred, as far as possible, to his practical and political life. The process no doubt was, or might have been, somewhat dangerous; but political liberty in the sixteenth century was by no means sufficiently advanced to run the risk of encountering such dangers. Nor was Bruno unaware that the social and political condition of men necessitated some limitations; though to every concession in this direction he is careful to add the proviso that the philosophical and religious freedom of the individual should be as much as possible respected.

Having thus brought before you a few of the salient points in the philosophy of this most remarkable thinker, it is time to sum up this part of my subject.

Bruno was one of those gigantic intellects, those myriad-minded men whose multifarious erudition, eclectic methods, and many-sided sympathies render a summary of their operation very difficult, if not impossible. Like a survey of a widely-extended landscape, or an enormous building, the conspectus will only be a piecing, more or less rude and imperfect, of separate and fragmentary points of view. Employing his own illustration of the infinite powers and feelings of the human mind, we might almost say, of his own intellect, that its

centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere. A child of the sixteenth century, his speculations comprehend and his sympathies embrace methods of thought current in ancient times on the one hand, and in our own day on the other. The immense range of his studies is proved by the fact that there is hardly an author, certainly not a subject known in his day, to which he does not seem to have paid attention, and on which he has not thrown some light.

1. To us his chief interest arises from his skepticism. The nature and extent of this I have already glanced at. As in the case of so many other philosophical enquirers it was, perhaps, more in intent than reality, limited and methodical. Bruno doubted to know. Skepticism was the foundation of his philosophy and his science. Surrounded by despotic powers and principles, philosophical, religious, and political, which demanded a blind submission from every man, Bruno boldly protested against them all. They were so many external restrictions and antiquated prejudices which possessed no inherent validity except so far as they received the approval of a man's own conscience. Hence he opposed himself to Peripateticism, to scholasticism, to mediæval science, and Papal Christianity. He even carries his opposition to the ruling convictions of his time further than his own system of thought appears altogether to warrant. For although *e.g.* he himself places such stress on abstractions, he attacks the abstract ideas of scholastic logic in the true spirit of nominalistic criticism. The truth moreover that he finally attains by his idealism is so far imperfect and indemonstrable that his highest knowledge consists in a direction rather than a goal, an effort than an achievement, a perpetual struggle than a definite crowning victory. He also shares with Galileo,[1] and other thinkers of the time, the conviction of a distinct separation between theology and philosophy, and is so far a maintainer of double truth. Indeed this doctrine could have presented no difficulty to a thinker who regarded truth as essentially multiple, though its various forms and aspects finally met and were united in the absolute one.

Nor can it be said that the final merging of his own idealism in the mystic cabbala of Raymund Lulli imparted the conviction of absolute and demonstrable truth for which he had been searching all his life. Notwithstanding his stress on that philosophy so signally manifested by making it the subject of so many of his works, not-

[1] Comp. Berti, *Il Processo originale di Galileo Galilei*, p. xxx. 'Egli (Galileo) con ragioni alle quali, nulla si potrebbe oggi ancora aggiungere, sostiene nettamente non solo la convenienza, ma la necessità di separare la scienza dalla religione, e di dare nelle dispute il primo luogo non già alle parole della Scrittura, ma alle osservazioni ed alle dimostrazioni.'

withstanding his ingenious manipulations of numbers, alphabets, abstractions, physical and hyperphysical entities, notwithstanding the claim of Lulli to have discovered a key to human omniscience, the ultimate feeling concerning it in Bruno's mind was imperfect attainment. Like his fellow pilgrims through the darkness and mist of occult science, Agrippa and Vanini, Bruno also arrives at the conclusion that metaphysics cannot yield that perfect conviction of truth which its earnest seeker desiderates. He was too keen-sighted not to perceive that whatever advantage metaphysical terms and abstractions might have as ideal comprehensions of diverse realities, the standpoint was essentially imaginative and individual, and that the profounder the research, the more recondite and unattainable became its object. There is a remarkable passage [1] near the conclusion of his chief Lullian treatise in which he announces his agreement with the *De Vanitate Scientiarum* of Agrippa concerning Lulli's art. In universal propositions he says, no one but a fool would think he attained perfect knowledge after all his study. Even Aristotle, who of all philosophers attributed most power to the human intellect, admitted that in the ultimate substances and differentiæ of things the eye of our understanding was not otherwise than the eye of a night-bird when directed to the sun. At the same time he repudiates the skepticism which remains satisfied with the admission of its ignorance. He merely claims for Lulli's art that whatever is possible in all sciences by way of generalization, is acquired by it as by the cause which in all things is most general.[2]

An interesting question, especially connected with Bruno's untimely end, is the relation of his skepticism to Papal Christianity. It is generally assumed to have been one of open hostility; it would be more truly designated as one of divergency. As a rule Bruno was more un-Christian than anti-Christian. No doubt there were aspects of Papal ecclesiasticism to which he was thoroughly opposed, *e.g.* its compulsory dogmatic spirit with which he contended throughout his life. The crucifix thrust in his face by those who were piling burning faggots around him, was a melancholy symbol of the manner in

[1] *De Lampade Combinatoria Lulliana*, Lulli, Opera, p. 732. 'In universis etenim nullus nisi plusquam mediocriter stultus veram et non vanitati similem post omne studium se nactum esse noverit scientiam; quod sane et is qui maximè omnium philosophorum humano ingenio tribuisse videtur Aristoteles testatur, ubi rerum substantias ultimasque differentias, innominabiles imperceptibilesque dicit et oculum intelligentiæ nostræ ad manifestissima se habere naturæ haud aliter quam nocturnæ avis oculos ad lumen solis.'

[2] 'Quod ergo per omnes scientias habere tandem possibile est, per artem istam utpoti per causam maxime generalem acquiritur.'—Lulli, op. loc. cit., p. 732.

which Christianity had always been presented for his acceptance and adoration—a harsh, bitter, narrow, ignorant bigotry, administered often by men who were incarnations of the worst vices that could disgrace humanity. Nor did Protestantism, as he had experienced it, at Geneva and Marburg, represent the religion of Christ in a much more inviting guise. Some idea of Christianity, conjoined with tolerance and a respect for intellectual freedom, he may have derived from his sojourn at Wittenberg; though even here the phenomenon was only evanescent. There is no trace in his writings of any formal attempt to extract the pure gold of Christ's words and life from the dross by which human ambition had surrounded it; and yet there are intimations in his interrogatory before the Inquisition that this aspect of Christianity had not altogether escaped him. When asked, *e.g.* what he considered necessary to salvation, his reply was: 'Faith, hope, and charity,' an answer which, with its implication of the superior merits of charity, must have sounded satirical on such an occasion. His statement, adduced by Mocenigo, of the corruption of the Church, compared with its primitive purity; and the coercive methods then employed in propagating Christianity, contrasted with the persuasive and rational modes first used for the purpose; his expressed estimate of the evidential value of miracles, viz. that the higher attestation of Christ's religion comes from the precepts of the Gospel; all point in the direction of an attempt to distinguish the divine elements in Christianity from the human incrustations in which they had become embedded.[1] But after making due allowance for these intimations, we must admit that Bruno's conception of Christianity—indeed his view of every religion, is one-sided and imperfect. There was a predisposition, closely connected with his own mental tendencies, to make religion entirely synonymous with intellectual culture,

[1] Further light on this important point may be expected from the hoped-for publication of a number of Bruno's unpublished works in the possession of Mr. Abraham de Noroff. In a communication which this gentleman has made to Signor Berti, and which the latter has inserted among his collection of Bruno documents, he says: 'Nous appellons l'attention du monde savant sur les passages du MS. qui levent complètement l'accusation calomnieuse qui a été portée contre le célèbre philosophe italien d'avoir professé des dogmes antichrétiens, et la transmigration des âmes. Les passages consignés sur les ff. 23. v. et. 48 v. ainsi que les propositions émises dans de livre: *De triginta Statuarum* (pp. 114–121), qui adoptent la *révélation*, qui s'appuyent sur les paroles du Christ (dont le très saint nom est tracé par la main de Bruno en *lettres majuscules*), et enfin qui parlent de l'immatérialité et de la substantialité de l'âme, protestent hautement contre les farouches ennemis de Bruno, auxquels sans doute il applique les paroles du Christ citées à la f. 48. v.: *Hic dies vestra et potestas tenebrarum.*'—Berti, *Documenti*, etc., p. 112.

instead of regarding moral discipline and spiritual feeling as its necessary concomitants. Just as there are men in our day who think Christ should have foretold the latest development of modern science, so Christianity, to have been perfect in Bruno's eyes, ought to have announced the Copernican Astronomy instead, perhaps, of the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity had too much of the passive stolidity of the age, and not enough of the daring and imagination of the winged Pegasus, to satisfy Bruno's aspirations. Religion as the exponent of the Eternal Mind ought to possess an infinite, necessary, and universal character,[1] whereas Christianity, in its traditional development, seemed to him to have a merely local and partial aim. Sacchetti, in one of his novels,[2] relates how, in the Dante craze at Ravenna in the fourteenth century, a certain youth took the burning wax-lights from before the crucifix on the altar and placed them before the tomb of the poet. Bruno also wished to remove the wax-lights designed to do honour to Christianity, and to place them on the altar he had erected to the Infinite and the One, the all-filling, all-animating Creator of the universe. Hence he had no objection to those speculative doctrines of Christianity which were allied to the Infinite, or were susceptible of a metaphysical interpretation. Indeed, we have in Bruno a foreshadowing of the peculiar interpretation of Christian dogma which was so common in the first half of this century among German idealists, the disciples of Schelling, Hegel and Feuerbach. He had, as we have seen, no objection to a Trinity in which the second Person was the Wisdom perpetually emanating from its Divine source, and the third Person was the Anima Mundi, or soul of the universe, 'the Lord and Giver of Life' (though Bruno would have denied the personality) of the Nicene Creed. He would not have disputed the Incarnation interpreted as a spiritual process.[3] Immortality and a future life fell in completely with his general scheme of thought provided he was not compelled to admit a bodily resurrection, and that some scope for transmigration, physical and mental, were conceded him. On the whole view of the question we may say that there is nothing in his mode of thought directly opposed to the first pure form of Christianity, whatever may be said of his attitude to the Papal caricature of it extant in his time. We must remember, in estimating Bruno's relation to

[1] Spaventa, op. cit., p. 168.

[2] *Novelle*, cxxi. Ed. Barbèra, ii. p. 481.

[3] Cf. Berti, p. 355. It was perhaps the materialistic mode of explaining it that suggested to Bruno his illustration of it by the Centaur, though such illustrations and analogies were in his time, as well as subsequently, often employed to explain the doctrines of Christianity. Comp. Bishop Huet's hardly less profane illustrations of the Incarnation: *Dem. Evan.* Ed. vi., p. 466.

the Church, that he openly admitted the fact of his hostility. In his interrogatory before the Inquisition he candidly acknowledges that he had cherished, from his earliest years, doctrines and opinions irreconcileable with those of the Church; and all that he pleads for in his defence is that this divergence of thought and sentiment did not constitute that fatal breach with dogmatic Christianity which his enemies supposed. He emphatically disclaimed all desire to see Christianity supplanted by any other religious faith; and confessed his desire to see it allied closely with metaphysics. The conception of a universal religion, like his own Infinite, in which all churches and creeds, everything local and temporary should be merged in the Absolute, in which, to use St. Paul's words, 'Even Christ Himself shall be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all,' no doubt swept occasionally before his eyes, but only as a vague, misty dream of the future [1]—the apocalypse of an idealistic thinker. Bruno's imagination was, we know, fond of soaring beyond both realities and possibilities; and due allowance should be made for this fact when we meet, as we often do in his writings, schemes of thought-ideals of human progress, and vague vistas of futurity on which he himself would have laid no stress as assured convictions or articles of faith. Nor should we forget another trait of his intellect which, if neglected, might involve us in considerable misapprehension of his character. I mean the daring and impetuous nature of his speculations, which continually seduces him beyond the limits of his real intellectual and religious standpoint.

2. In that curious letter of Bruno's to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, which I noticed, he styles himself among other titles, 'The awakener of sleeping minds.' [2] Few designations would better express the main influence which Bruno exercised on his time; but it was an effect produced more by his rationalism and eclecticism than by his

[1] The passages in Bruno's works in which a dislike to all positive religions seems manifested, are evidently based on the condition of their resemblance, more or less, to the spurious Christianity of his time. Hence when he says of these:—

'Humanam turbant pacem sæclique quietem
Extinguunt mentis lucem, neque moribus prosunt,'

he was clearly drawing from his own experience of Romanism. A tolerant religion, which inculcated as primary articles in its creed, peace, culture, and morality, he would doubtless have cordially approved. Bruno's anticipations of a regenerated world are thus conveyed in his last published work:—

'Novi Telluris faciem nihilominus esse
Fulgentem, veré sanctum et venerabile sidus.'

De Triplici minimo et mensura, p. 2.

[2] 'Dormitantium animorum excubitor.'—Comp. Bartholmèss, i. p. 97, note 2.

skeptical tendencies, so far as these influences are independent of each other. It was as a Free-thinker that Bruno was especially known to his contemporaries—one who carried bold and unscrupulous speculation into every province of knowledge, not as a mere denier of accepted doctrines. He is therefore an illustration of the truth that breadth of culture, eclecticism and toleration will subserve the same purpose as negation in undermining any narrow system of dogma. Indeed of the two it is the more effective and lasting method: the true opposite to dogma being not negation, which may be just as dogmatic as assertion, but latitudinarianism, freedom of research, and full toleration for all sincere and rationally attained conclusions. The intellect, according to Bruno, should be free and unbound. When it thus exercised its powers, its conclusions attained a moral coercion which he truly pronounces irresistible. 'Our opinions,' he said, 'do not depend on ourselves: evidence, the force of circumstances, the reason, the will of God impose them on us. If no man therefore thinks what he wishes nor as he wishes, no one has the right of compelling another to think as he does. Every man ought to tolerate with patience, nay with indulgence, the beliefs of his neighbour. Toleration, that natural faith graven upon all well-born hearts, the fruit of the enlightened reason, is an indispensable requirement of logic, as well as a precept of morality and religion.' Noble words! we may add, addressed to an intolerant age. Bruno was unfortunately more alive to the advantages of toleration than sedulous in its practice. We have already seen how vehement his antipathy occasionally became to modes of thought and feeling which he declined or was unable to approve.

As a contrast to the Free-thought of Montaigne and his followers, we must note in passing Bruno's opposition to Humanism. He perceived that whatever services classical learning had, in time past, conferred on the Renaissance when it was a new movement, it now threatened to become in some cases an intellectual despotism. A tyrant was to him a tyrant, even though he had commenced his career as tribune of the people. Not only the thought but even the language of modern Europe was becoming subjected to the sway of antiquity. Aristotle and Plato ruled men's minds, Cicero their tongues, Seneca and the poets their feelings. Bruno was indignant with a subserviency which threatened to become abject servility He pours his invective like a lava-flood over the grammarian, the pedant, and the purist: speaking of the vanity of these apes of the ancients, he says of one of them, 'Though he is only an individual, he alone, thanks to his superiority, is equal to all men. Should he happen to laugh he calls himself Demokritus, should he weep he is

Heraklitus, when he argues he is Aristotle, when he constructs his chimæras he takes the name of Plato, when he loudly harangues he styles himself Demosthenes, when he construes a phrase of Virgil he becomes Maro himself. By turns he chides Achilles, approves Æneas, blames Hector, exclaims against Pyrrhus, laments with Priam, accuses Turnus, excuses Dido, praises Achates; in a word, *nihil divinum a se alienum putat.*[1] For the same reason Bruno jeers at compositions such as Montaigne's Essays, in which the dicta of ancient ages and poets are joined together like patchwork, or he describes them as a mixed salad of proverbs, of Greek and Latin phrases. He also employs the inversion of the common saying, viz. that antiquity is the youth of the world, and the present its old age. What did antiquity know of the extension of the earth and the heavens by Columbus and Copernicus, of the advances science was then making? Antiquity had, according to Bruno, served its purpose; philosophers must now turn their faces to new worlds, and expend their energies on new objects.

3. But with all his stress on the new astronomy and his anticipation of the triumphs of modern science, Bruno has little claim to be regarded as a physical scientist. The bent of his genius was altogether metaphysical. He had little capacity, and less taste, for the slow, plodding methods of induction. His eager spirit and comprehensive intellect grasped intuitively the inference from any given fact or series of observations, whether of Nature or humanity, and his fervid imagination immediately deduced the extremest possible consequences from such a conclusion. In this respect the contrast so frequently pointed out between Bruno and Galileo is very remarkable. While the latter was thoroughly imbued by the spirit of modern scientific methods, Bruno was mainly the idealist, the theoriser and the poet. Both accepted the Copernican system, for instance; but while Galileo was busily exploring our own planetary system with his telescope, Bruno had already traversed infinite space on the wings of imagination, and filled the remote heavens with other suns and inhabited planets far beyond human ken or research. While Galileo was satisfied with determining the physical features and laws of our own system, Bruno had boldly speculated on the relation which the new astronomy must necessarily bear to humanity and its concerns, to Christianity and its doctrines, to political and social regulations. While again a modern scientist would have explored by laborious induction the particular law governing a given phenomenon, Bruno must needs obtain by his monads and his metaphysical abstractions a comprehensive theory, which included and explained

[1] Bar., ii. 51. Comp. p. 299.

to his satisfaction all natural phenomena. A partial or particular truth, the isolated cause of a single phenomenon, a process or discovery that he could not formulate in terms of the Absolute or the Infinite, was to him no truth at all. These qualities and tendencies of Bruno have naturally met with scant sympathy among our inductive philosophers. Contrasted with Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, the men of science and observation, Bruno seems but a vain dreamer, a thinker who intermingled strange paradoxes and trivial fancies with serious and well grounded hypotheses; and whose occasionally correct adumbrations of scientific truth are only the happy guesses of an erratic imagination which, in its impetuous and fantastic careering in every conceivable direction, must needs have come into occasional contact with ideas more or less true. To all of which may be replied, in the words of a well-known proverb, 'The king's chaff is as good as other people's corn.' Bruno, with the help of what he terms the *lume interno, ragione naturale, altezza dell' intelletto*, anticipated what neither Copernicus nor Galileo foresaw, and the bare idea of which is said to have 'horrified' Kepler.[1] I mean the doctrine of more habitable worlds than one. Nor were Bruno's incursions into science so entirely idealistic, and divorced from all physical proofs and considerations, as some of his critics have assumed. Thus in the inference just maintained, analogy would suffice to suggest that planets similarly circumstanced to our own might also have living beings, in many respects like ourselves. As a rule, Bruno starts in every case from a physical science basis. His abstractions are, as we observed, metaphysical inferences from the infinite he recognized in Nature. His definition of God is derived from the laws of the visible world. His ideal worlds are but shadowy copies of this, though, like a disciple of Plotinus, he would fain have reversed this relation and made this the evanescent shadow of other Real worlds invisible and eternal. It was as a disciple of modern science—not as a metaphysician—that he first betrayed his Skepticism and came into hostile contact with the Church. In a word, with all his admitted idealistic tendencies, Bruno started in his investigations from the standpoint of physical science. The Pegasus on which he wings

[1] Delambre, *Histoire de l'Astronomie Modern*, i. 386. Speaking of the infinity of the Universe, he says, 'C'était le sentiment du malheureux Jordanus Bruno; Képler le combat, la seule ideé que l'étoile puisse être un nouveau monde, le fait frissoner d'horreur.' Humboldt, in his *Cosmos* (iii. p. 18), makes the mistake of saying that Bruno regarded Kepler 'with enthusiastic admiration,' whereas, Berti has pointed out, Kepler's first work was published when Bruno had already spent four years in the prison of the Roman Inquisition. Berti, *Copernico*, etc., p. 87, note 2.

his flight towards the Infinite is not only an earth-born steed, dieted on terrestrial hay and oats, but has received some preliminary exercise on *terra firma.*

I have already hinted at Bruno's forecasts of modern-science theories and discoveries. Besides his anticipations of inhabited worlds, and distant suns, he made some happy conjectures as to the movement of the fixed stars, the planetary nature of comets, the true figure of the earth, viz. that it was not quite spherical, the formation of the sun, viz. a luminous photosphere superimposed on an opaque nucleus; he seems also to have had some presentiment of the discovery that the constituents of heavenly bodies are similar to those of our own globe.

Moreover, his attempt to unify all the processes of Nature, though put forward as a transcendental conception, has a distinct *rapprochement* to recent discoveries in physical science, whereby the conservation and relation of forces have become well founded scientific hypotheses. Moreover, should future science now resolve all the physical forces of the universe into different modifications of one single elementary force, Bruno might be adduced, with some show of reason, as having had a presentiment of such a truth.

4. As a natural result of his greater mental versatility, Bruno's influence on modern thought has greatly exceeded that of his contemporaries, Galileo and Kepler. Not only has he anticipated the conclusions of physicists, but he has engendered and stimulated no inconsiderable amount of metaphysical speculation, both in his own country and in Germany. This fact will perhaps not add to his credit among the disciples of Comte and other scientific dogmatists of our own day. But those who still retain the attributes of genuine philosophers, who believe that nothing essentially human lies outside the scope of philosophic sympathy, who recognize the Infinite in Nature and in Humanity, who are well acquainted with the part metaphysics have played in time past, and who watch contemporary currents of speculation, will not think less of Bruno for indicating so many phases of speculation, and presenting so many points of contact, metaphysical as well as physical, with the common thought and sentiment of mankind. With all the so-called progress of modern science, notwithstanding its perpetual attempts to circumscribe human feeling, Idealistic energy and aspiration within the limits of bodily senses, and its efforts to dwarf the Infinite to the measure of the Finite, the mind of man still bears unmistakable traces of its origin and of its destiny: Like that of Bruno it tends, when free and unthwarted, to the Infinite.

Having thus sketched, at greater length than I intended, the

salient points of Bruno's teaching, I now resume the thread of his history.

Eight years had elapsed since this apostle of Free-thought had been deprived of freedom—years, we may well suppose, of terrible torture and misery; but sustained by the conviction that he had but employed the faculties God had given him to discover truth; and as he himself pleaded, he had absolutely no power to thwart or contradict what seemed to be their clear and unbiassed conclusions. The end was now drawing nigh. The Holy Office was getting impatient with the obstinacy which it regarded as an aggravation of the original 'heretical pravity." Numberless had been the attempts to break down the stubborn spirit of the Nolan philosopher. Theologians, we are told, had visited him daily for that purpose, but their efforts were powerless. He had also been repeatedly summoned before the Congregation of the Holy Office; but with no result. The records of some of these interviews are among the 'Roman Documents' Professor Berti has published.[1] Thus, on Thursday, the 14th of January, 1599, Bruno was 'visited,' *i.e.* brought before the Congregation, which consisted of sixteen cardinals and other ecclesiastical dignitaries. On this particular occasion were read eight heretical propositions extracted from Bruno's works by the commissary general of the Holy Office, with the help of Bellarmine; who seems to have been as forward in the proceedings against Bruno as he was afterwards in the persecution of Galileo. These propositions were submitted to Bruno for deliberation and recantation. On Thursday, the 4th of February, of the same year, Bruno was again before the Congregation, when the term of forty days was assigned as the period within which his deliberations should be confined. What happened at the end of the forty days when Bruno, no doubt, reiterated his previous refusals, we do not know. Another summer and autumn passed slowly over the head of the immured philosopher; and the next news we have of him is on Tuesday, the 21st of December, when he is once more brought before the Congregation. On this occasion he said that 'he neither ought nor wished to recant; indeed, he had nothing to recant, and was ignorant of the matters on which his recantation was demanded—an allegation which probably signifies his skeptical ignorance of those dogmas for which his concurrence was required. The same day, perhaps on the same occasion, Bruno was heard on the subject of his opinions and his prison privations—doubtless a plea against the cruelties to which he was subjected—and the Congregation appointed certain of their body to try and persuade him to abjure, by the promise of consequent advantage and

[1] See his *Copernico e vicende del sistema Copernicano in Italia*, pp. 219–235.

gain.[1] Thus passed the last month of 1599. Three weeks of the new year—the last of his life—had gone by, and Bruno stood again before his inquisitors. This time he presented a memorial, which was opened but not read. That its contents were of an unsatisfactory character is shown by the appended decree, which informs us that the General of the Domincans and the Procurator General had been appointed to address him (for the last time) on the subject of his recantation. Once more Bruno refused, boldly maintaining that he had never put forth heretical propositions; by which he no doubt meant consciously false ones. The resolution was thereupon made that extreme proceedings must be taken, and Bruno delivered over to the secular arm.[2] This was formally done on Tuesday, the 8th of February. Bruno was then declared an impenitent and obstinate heretic, and ordered to be delivered over to the civil powers. The next day was appointed for the public announcement of the sentence, and the formal degradation of Bruno as an apostate and lapsed priest.

Professor Berti is apparently in error in supposing that this ceremony took place in the church of Santa Maria della Minerva, subsequently employed for this purpose.[3] Both Scioppius and the *Avvisi*, or Roman Gazette of the day, agree in making the palace of the Supreme Cardinal Inquisitor (Madruzzi)[4] the scene of the event. There for the last time Bruno appeared before his judges, attired according to his usual custom in his Dominican dress. He was compelled to kneel down and listen to his sentence. The recital comprised the chief events of his life, the erroneous opinions of his writings, both interpreted by the false light of ecclesiastical prejudice. The tender and solicitous efforts of the Holy Office to convert him were duly recapitulated; and once more his obstinacy was denounced with the unctuous and hypocritical expressions of regret commonly employed by the Inquisition on such occasions. To the long harangue Bruno listened with firm and unmoved countenance. With equal

[1] 'Eique (Jordano) ostendat propositiones abjurandas ut agnoscat errores, se emendat, ac disponat ad abjurandum, ipsumque lucri faciant ut possit expediri.'—Berti, *Copernico*, p. 230; *Documenti*, p. 70.

[2] Berti, *Copernico*, p. 231.

[3] The business of the Roman Inquisition at this period was regulated by the Constitution of Sixtus V. ('Immensa Æterni Dei'), A.D. 1588. See details in Limborch *History of the Inquisition*, i. p. 153, etc., etc. According to the same authority, 'These Supreme Inquisitors meet twice a week, viz. on Wednesdays, formerly in the house of the oldest Cardinal Supreme Inquisitor, but now in St. Mary's Church *Supra Minervam*, except the Pope commands otherwise,' pp. 154–5; comp. Berti, *Copernico*, p. 233.

[4] In the Congregation of December, 1599, a list of the members of which is extant, the first name is Cardinalis Mandrutius, and the second Cardinalis S. Severinæ. *Copernico*, p. 228.

unconcern he underwent the ceremony of degradation—the stripping off his priestly vestments and attiring him in the heretic's coat of the San benito, while the solemn formula was pronounced 'By the authority of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by our own, we take from thee the clerical habit, we depose and degrade thee, and deprive thee of every ecclesiastical order and benefice.'[1] Once only did Bruno condescend to notice the grim farce of which he was the object. When the sentence was pronounced, he turned to his judges and with a firm voice and defiant expression, uttered the noble and memorable words, 'I suspect you are more afraid to pronounce that sentence than I am to receive it.'[2] The ceremony over, Bruno was consigned to the secular arm with the usual injunction, that 'he should be punished as leniently as possible, and without shedding of blood'—the iniquitous formula for death by fire. Thereupon he was removed to the civil prison at Rome. The usual delay of eight days was granted in order to afford one last opportunity of recantation, but in vain. At length he was brought forth to die on Thursday, the 17th of February.

The scene must have been remarkable. The year 1600 was a jubilee year. There were then in Rome no less than fifty cardinals.[3] The streets were crowded with pilgrims. In every direction might be seen troops of strangers dressed in the different costumes of their own country, wending their way from one church to another, imploring pardon for their sins. There was ringing of bells, marching of processions, singing penitential psalms, offering of vows and prayers at different shrines from morning till night. 'While it might have seemed,' says Berti,[4] 'that all hearts ought to have been inclined to mercy, and attracted lovingly to the gentle Redeemer of humanity, the poor philosopher of Nola, preceded and followed by crowds of people, accompanied by priests carrying crucifixes and escorted by soldiers, was wending his way to the Campo di Fiora to die for freedom and the rights of conscience. As the lonely thinker —the disciple and worshipper of the Infinite—passed through the streets, clothed in the San benito, but with head erect, and haughty, fearless glance, what thoughts must have passed through his mind! The feeling of utter isolation could not but have been felt by him. He must have found—it was the conclusion of his intellectual career, the inevitable destiny, too often, of the single-hearted truth-seeker—that he was alone in his researches, in his passionate quest

[1] Berti, *Vita*, p. 293.

[2] 'Majori forsan cum timore sententiam in me dicetis quam ego accipam.'—Bartholmèss, i. p. 338.

[3] Berti, *Vita*, p. 295.

[4] Berti, loc. cit.

for truth, in the inferences and conclusions he had laboriously wrought out. Sympathy with the crowds round him who, no doubt, hooted the heretic in order to display their own orthodoxy, he was hardly likely to feel, except as a sentiment of pity for the ignorance and fanaticism of which he was only one victim among many. He may have commiserated the 'Santa Asinita' of his enemies just as Huss did the 'Sancta simplicitas' of the poor woman who was devoutly bringing a faggot to his pyre. He could not but regard them as the followers of a religion which, no matter what its original excellencies, had become utterly depraved and immoral, a base and merciless tyranny over the conscience and freedom of mankind; or from the heights of his philosophy and his confidence in the final triumph of truth, he may have looked forward to a time when the 'Triumphant Beast' would be expelled in accordance with his own prediction; or if not expelled, would be deprived of its power to suppress and destroy every effort and aspiration after truth; or his imagination might possibly have been concentrated on those celestial worlds so often the objects of his contemplation and devout yearning, and on existences and pursuits more in harmony with his ideas of intellectual freedom and perfection. Among the last words contemporary tradition assign to him is the dying utterance of Plotinus:[1] 'I go to carry the Divine in us to the Divine in the universe;'[2] while the report was current among the newsmongers of the day that Bruno said that he died a martyr and willingly, even though his soul should not ascend to Paradise with the smoke of his fire, but that was of no consequence to him if he spoke the truth,'[3] words which, if authentic, are the fitting expressions when dying of one who living professed to love the truth for the truth's sake, 'per amor de la vera sapienza e studio de la vera contemplazione m' affatico, mi cruccio e mi tormento.'[4]

At length he comes to the fatal spot where the stake had been erected. He submits himself to be bound, and in a few minutes the fire blazes round the martyr; but not a word or moan escapes the firm set lips, no expression of suffering or weakness passes across the wan

[1] C. Cantu, *Gli Eretici d' Italia*, iii. p. 62.- '*Narrano* die ripetisse le parole di Plotino.'

[2] Πειρᾶσθαι τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον ἀνάγειν πρὸς τὸ ἐν τῷ παντὶ θεῖον. Prophyr. *de vita Plotini.*

[3] Berti, *Copernico*, p. 234.

[4] Op. Ital., ii. p. 4. The whole passage, which is noteworthy, is as follows: 'E se erro, non credo veramente errare, e parlando e scrivendo non disputo per amor de la vittoria per sè stessa,—— per che ogni riputazione e vittoria stimo nemica a dio, vilissima, e senza punto d' onore, dove non è la verita,—ma per amor de la vera sapienza e studio de la vera contemplazione m' affatico, mi cruccio, mi tormento.'

and pale but still handsome features. One single gesture of impatience he gives way to when his tormentors thrust the crucifix before his dying gaze. Then, Schioppius tells, he averted his eyes with a threatening glance. And surely any expression of disdain and indignation might have been justified on the occasion. The sacred symbol of Christianity had long become the degraded emblem of ambition, lust and tyranny, a sign from which every man endued with a sense of religion and virtue would at such a time instinctively avert his eyes.

'Thus,' says Schioppius, 'burnt, he perished miserably; he is gone, I suppose,' he adds satirically, 'to recount to those other worlds imagined by himself the way in which Romans treated blasphemous and impious men.'[1] Whether this information has ever reached the star-worlds of Bruno is a matter of small importance. The intelligence, with much ill news of a similar kind, has long since reached the worlds of futurity equally contemplated by Bruno—the worlds of modern thought and progress, of enlightenment and civilization, of toleration and Christian charity. There it is again and again recorded 'How Romans treated those' whom they chose to denominate 'blasphemers'; but as often as the tale is heard, it duly excites renewed sympathy for the sufferers and bitter indignation against their merciless persecutors. Now it is known on which side lay the blasphemy —the high treason against God—on his, whose life was spent in earnest search for truth, whose every thought was a passionate enthusiasm for the Infinite, or on theirs who, in the interests of intellectual obscurantism and unchristian tyranny, slew him. Now it is determined, with some approach to a definitive and irreversible judgment, that an interpretation of Christianity which could by any perversion of reasoning be supposed to sanction such an iniquitous deed was itself the greatest of blasphemies.

Bruno and Vanini share with most other martyrs of Freethought the forecast of the end destined to crown their life-work. The essential incompatibility between their own freer instincts and the dogmatic restrictions by which in past times they were surrounded seems to assume the form of a grave, though not mournful, presentiment of a violent death. In Bruno's case the feeling was also connected with his mental characteristics. It was but one phase or outcome of the fervid impetuosity of his intellect, the far-seeing anticipation of his imagination. His very earnestness in truth-search, accompanied by the indomitable consciousness of honesty and good

[1] Bartholmèss, i. p. 338. 'Sicque ustulatus misere periit, renunciatarus credo in reliquis illis quos finxit mundis quonam pacto homines blasphemi et impii a Romanis tractari solent.'

faith, made him supremely indifferent to consequences. What, after all, was more glorious than martyrdom for truth and for mental freedom? what more noble than self-sacrifice for the highest interests of humanity? What existence could compare in fame, in triumph, in virtue, in unselfishness, in true greatness, to such a death? Bruno gives utterance to his feelings and anticipations on this point in his *Eroici furori*, written sixteen years before his death. 'How much better,' says Cicada, Bruno's representative in that dialogue, 'is a worthy and heroic death than a disgraceful and vile success.'

'On that proposition,' responds the poet Tansillo, 'I composed this sonnet,' whereupon Bruno borrows from Tansillo the verses which have been generally accepted as his own prediction of his fate, and which express so nobly his feelings at the prospect,—

> 'Since I my wings to sweet desire do lend,
> The more the air uprises 'neath my feet,
> The swifter on the gale my pinions beat,
> And earth despising, toward heaven I tend.
> Nor for the son of Dæd'lus' guilty end
> Feel I dismay, nay, rather buoyant heat
> His deadly fall I joyfully would meet,
> Peer to such death what life could mortal spend.
> Soaring I hear my trembling heart's refrain
> "Where bearest me, O rash one? The fell steep
> Too arduous is not climb'd without much pain."
> "Fear not," I answer, "for the fatal leap
> Serene I cleave the clouds and death disdain,
> If death so glorious heaven will that I reap."'[1]

Never did human ambition assume a nobler and purer form, never was presentiment more completely and triumphantly realized. Like another son of Dædalus, at least an investigator of the 'Natura Dædala rerum,' 'the Dædalian nature of things,' Bruno's eagle flight was cut off in mid air; and he fell as he wished, and prognosticated, the victim of dogma but the heir of immortal fame.

* * *

Soon after these sheets were written preparations were made to commemorate the services which Giordano Bruno rendered to the cause of European enlightenment. Tardily, but perhaps not more so than the circumstances of the case warranted, the Italy he loved with so fatal a passion has recognized formally and publicly her appreciation of her gifted but unfortunate child. In addition to successive fêtes and memorials at Nola and Naples, a statue, the cost of which has been defrayed by public subscription, has been erected

[1] *Eroic. Fur.*, Op. Ital., ii. p. 336.

to his memory in Rome; while the Italian Government at its own expense has consented to publish an edition of his collected works. Thus his firm and heroic features now adorn the city, perhaps overlook the very spot, where his constancy was put to such a cruel test, and where his ashes were scattered to the wind; while his works, proscribed and burnt by the Inquisition, will, it is hoped, soon be in the hands of all cultivated Italians.[1] Henceforth the fame and appreciation he longed for, but only saw in the dim vista of futurity, are likely to be lavished on him with no niggard hand. In an Italy such as he would have delighted to call his native land, where at last thought enjoys the '*libertas philosophandi*' for which he craved and energised, and where the religious tyranny against which he protested no longer exists, Giordano enjoys the reparation rightly due to himself and the sublime cause of human liberty he so worthily represented. The recent revival of interest in himself and his writings suggest a parallel with the circumstances of his actual life. After many years' wandering in Europe he returned to his native land to find a long imprisonment and a martyr's death. Now, however, after the interval of some centuries, during which his name, except in works of philosophy, and in other parts of Europe, has been almost forgotten, and his writings well nigh destroyed, he, metaphorically, again returns to the Italy of his yearning, to enjoy through all futurity his rightful distinction of being, besides hero and martyr, one of the foremost philosophers and thinkers that favoured country has ever produced.

Miss Leycester. Poor Bruno! What a magnificent subject his life and death would be for an old Greek myth or a tragedy of Æschylus—'Prometheus Bound and Unbound—in a single life-drama.' The myth might perhaps assume this form: The hero is, let us say, the son of the fire-god Vesuvius. Molten fire courses through his veins, fire gleams from his eyes and takes a thousand varied forms in the brilliant pyrotechnic creations of his imagination. His impassioned words are like thunder-bolts and lightning-shafts, and his course like that of a fiery comet. Prometheus-like, he wishes to diffuse the blessings of heat and light among men. He fetches the vital flame not only from the single sun of our own system, but from the numberless suns scattered through space. All this concentrated

[1] At this date (1892) eight volumes, or more accurately, three volumes, in eight parts, of this National Edition of Bruno's whole works have appeared.

light he displays to men; some of whom admire him for his beneficence and rejoice in his enlightenment, while others hate him for discovering and exposing their ignorance. His perpetual war is with darkness and voluntary blindness. The eagles and birds of the daylight are glad in his presence; the owls and bats detest him. His light-giving mission he accomplishes in the varied irregular way in which all light-diffusers seem compelled to discharge their functions to humanity. Sometimes the flame which Bruno displays is bright and clear, while at other times it is not free from ashes and smoke and scoriæ. At last, after a wild meteor course of a few years, he falls into the hands of his greatest enemy, the Prince of Darknese, who wishes to keep mankind in ignorance and slavery. He takes and binds for many years the Italian Prometheus,—not that he can altogether extinguish the light, but he can arrest the course of the light-giver. Ultimately our Prometheus disappears from earth in a flame of fire; the element which gave him birth and consigned him to the bondage of life thus becoming the elemental cause of his death as man, though giving him new birth and eternal freedom as a fire-god. In requital of his services to men, and notwithstanding the opposition of his enemy, 'The Prince of the Power of the Air,' the comet becomes a stationary and brilliant star, and the 'Prometheus Bound' of our material world achieves the position of the 'Prometheus Unbound' of Olympian deities and high human intelligences.

HARRINGTON. In outline your *mythos* might be correct, but as matters of detail you exaggerate, I think, Bruno's light-bearing merits; and you do not discriminate between the Promethean fire he steals from heaven and the flames which the Prince of Darkness takes—I suppose from the opposite region—to consume him. But leaving the "myth" for history, Bruno is an eminent instance of a mental progress, of which we have other instances on our list—I mean the evolution from Skepticism to Mysticism. I do not mean the religious mysticism of Augustine and Cornelius Agrippa, but the half-pantheistic mysticism of Nicolas of Cusa and Raymund Lulli—a curious and indefinable conglomerate of philosophy, poetry,

devotion and superstition. It is wonderful how many noble intellects, who have started on the clear track of inductive reasoning and experimental philosophy, have come ultimately to anchor in this broad but misty harbour. I have always regarded the fact as an involuntary homage to the unknown by which we are surrounded. Is not this, by the way, the interpretation of that most mysterious of all modern dramas—the second part of Faust? In the first part the hero, whom I take to impersonate Goethe himself, has exhausted the supposed truths and pleasures which belong to earth, and has reaped from them nothing but skepticism and satiety. In the second—like Bruno in his excursions through space, or his mystical treatises on Lulli's philosophy (you remember how he describes his idealism as an emancipation from prison)—Faust awakens to a newer life. He describes the event in lines of which we might find a thousand-fold echo in Bruno's works—

> Des Lebens Pulse schlagen frisch lebendig
> Aetherische Dämm'rung milde zu begrüssen:
> Du Erde warst auch diese Nacht beständig
> Und athmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen,
> Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu umgeben
> Du regst und rührst ein kraftiges Beschliessen
> Zum höchsten Daseyn immerfort zu streben.

In other words, he determines to enjoy a higher existence in a shadowy world of phantasies and abstractions; in which, indeed, he becomes so immersed as to lose most of his own individuality, though he does not quite lose the skeptical truth-searching spirit of his former life. Of course Goethe had a more scientific knowledge than Bruno of the real powers of Nature; but that is the chief difference between them.

TREVOR. Your idea may have something to say for it. But any distinct definition of Goethe's object in the second part of Faust seems to me hazardous. In fact, I have never been able to perceive that he had any set purpose at all in the construction of the poem. It is a congeries of dramas, phantasies, rhapsodies and sublimities relating to nature, art, philosophy, theology; in short, to most things in heaven above, the earth beneath, and the regions under the earth. If we could cer-

tainly regard it from your point of view as Goethe's intellectual goal, then we might take it, together with Bruno's Lullism and the mysticism of so many other thinkers, as an instance of the tendency to expansiveness which marks the latter stages of the mental progress of some great thinkers—a kind of intellectual eclecticism combined with emotional diffusiveness—which is the opposite pole to the narrow dogmatism in which ordinary minds at last find anchorage.

ARUNDEL. An approximation to Bruno's poetic philosophy nearer home we might find in Shelley, whose *Prometheus Unbound* may be said to represent the second or expansive part of his mental career, as the second part of Faust does in Goethe's case. Such a poem as Alastor, for instance, is redolent of the vague, tender mysticism in which Bruno loved to expatiate. Indeed, there seems some similarity in the objects of their separate works. The *Spaccio delle Bestia Trionfante* may well pair off with the *Prometheus Unbound*, while *Gli eroici furori* might have borne the title of 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.'[1]

MISS LEYCESTER. You might have carried your parallelism further. The severe strictures on priests and the intolerance and dogmatism of churches contained in the *Revolt of Islam* resemble pretty closely what we find on the same topics in Bruno's works. If his doctrine of metempsychosis were true, we might easily imagine that the soul of Bruno had passed into Shelley.

HARRINGTON. Those whom Bruno's spirit and method seem especially to have animated are the philosophers of Italy since his time. There we have an instance of a national philosophy —the most perfect in Europe—which has, without a single eminent exception, started from similar positions, and arrived at like conclusions. Its two chief characteristics are Freethought and Idealism, the latter being sometimes religious, sometimes not. It would hardly be a great exaggeration to say that the ghost of Bruno, slightly 'clothed upon' by the

[1] As the similarity of Shelley to Bruno has been made the subject of more than one magazine and review article during late years, it may be right to say that these words were written in 1879.

German speculation of the last century, now occupies all the foremost chairs in Italian universities; for they seem filled by Hegelians.

Miss Leycester. We must beware of laying too much stress on a singular manifestation of principles common to all idealists from Parmenides to the present day. At the same time Bruno's influence on Germany seems more remarkable than the community of sentiment which he naturally shares with his thoughtful, imaginative countrymen. For, next to Hume—and even that exception may be questioned—he is the foreign thinker who has most stimulated and influenced German speculation since the time of Kant, especially if we take into consideration the debt Spinoza also owes to him.

Trevor. It is easy, I think, to exaggerate the similarity between Bruno and succeeding idealists, and it is a mistake into which more than one of his biographers and critics have fallen. What is certainly true of his writings is their marvellous suggestiveness. This, I think, would be admitted by any thinking man in our own day. But he is better adapted for indicating new sources and directions of knowledge than for fully availing himself of the former, or persistently following up any one of the latter.

Harrington. His intellectual tendency might be summed up in a small compass as a determination to Infinitize, if I might coin the word. Schelling, in his Bruno Dialogue, says, 'Die Neigung das Unendliche in dem Endlichen und hinwiederum dieses in jenem zu setzen in allen philosophischen Reden und Untersuchungen herrschend ist.'[1] To find the Infinite in the finite of religion, physical science, humanity, was the main purport of his teaching. Though I am aware this tendency may be misapplied, and in some aspects be made to appear ludicrous, it has always seemed to me the mark of a comprehensive intellect. I think, on the whole, all superior minds gravitate to the Infinite. We see this not only in the case of theologians and their definitions of the universal existence and energy of the Supreme Being, but in their antagonists, the positivists and physical scientists. The materialist, who

[1] Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, iv. p. 242.

denies a God, will yet plead for the eternity and omnipresence of matter. The scientist, who denies the Divine government of the world, will still insist on the eternity and universality of the laws of causation or gravitation. The legislator with his codes, the moralist with his precepts, will endeavour to base their respective regulations on some permanent and imperishable basis; in short, they infinitize equally with the theologian, and frequently, I must own, with considerably less reason or justification.

TREVOR. I presume you do not mean that the induction of instances on which a scientist founds some hypothesis, *e.g.* the law of evolution, is of the same kind as the inferences of the theologian, from the order, regularity and design he discerns in nature.

HARRINGTON. I was speaking at the moment of the unreasonable contempt which scientists and positivists show for the conceptions of the theologian when they transcend what we actually see, and I suggested that their own conceptions frequently pass the limits of the seen and the knowable.

ARUNDEL. But I really do not see why you might not have gone a step further, and placed the conclusions of the reasoning theologian on precisely the same basis as those of the scientist. The latter, for instance, deduces from a certain chain of facts and observations the doctrine of evolution as the eternal process which has brought about the existing variety of living beings on the earth. I also, *e.g.* infer from a consideration of different processes I perceive in operation about me—laws of nature, of history, and morality—a Divine mind. Why is the cogency of my inference to be considered inferior to that of his? The question is of the agency which produces a number of effects. I pronounce for mind in the form of eternal volition. The scientist declares for the mere process as the ultimate link in his chain of the knowable—the blind striving or effort which he affirms is all he is cognisant of, on which ground, I suppose of the superior merits of blindness to foresight, he calls my deduction superstitious, while he dignifies his own by the appellation of science.

TREVOR. Well, we are neither atheists nor positivists, so

the question does not immediately concern us. But, in fairness to the science point of view, you must acknowledge that there is a difference between merely affirming a process of which a man has direct evidence before his eyes and asserting an unseen and yet personal cause which, *ex vi terminorum*, is unprovable.

HARRINGTON. I confess I agree with Arundel. If the scientist infers from his induction an external or universal process, or, as I said, if he infinitizes, he stands really on the same ground as the theologian. Remember, I do not blame the tendency to infinitize. Besides being useful, it is clearly quite irresistible. All I say is, I cannot perceive the adequacy of the reasoning on which the scientist of our day commonly attacks theology. Of course I acknowledge still less the validity of the reasons for which theology, in time past, has attacked and sought to suppress science.

MISS LEYCESTER. But granting this tendency to infinitize, as you call it, I want to ask whether we are to regard it as intuitional and inborn, or as a result of experience or association. In the first case we might take it as the subjective feeling or sense by which we apprehend religion; in the second case, I suppose we could not do so.

ARUNDEL. Why not? A capacity for acquiring might be just as strong a proof that we were destined for the acquisition, as an instinctive and inborn feeling would be. I suppose that the intuition, as an innate faculty, would hardly be denied among races accustomed to contemplate and reason on the Infinite.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Bruno's infinitizing process was, I think, happily employed when he brought it to bear on ecclesiastical dogmas. I often long to ask about some petty detail of Christian worship, or some unimportant matter of doctrine—How would it bear the test of the Infinite in time and space? What would the inhabitants of Sirius, supposing there are any, and are reasoning beings like ourselves, think of our squabbles about vestments and rubrics, or the charity of the Athanasian Creed? Whereas the precepts on which Christ lays stress have distinctly an infinite and eternal character. Granting the existence of reasoning beings, and the duties He commands

are necessary and universal—as true in a remote planet as they are here, and at certain æons before the promulgation of Christianity as they will be for ages to come.

HARRINGTON. Undoubtedly, they partake of the old formula for universal truth, which by some strange irony, has been adapted to ecclesiastical dogma: 'Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.'

TREVOR. What you say is true; only don't forget the hint in my paper as to the unsatisfactory nature of that extremely subtle, metaphysical and recondite Christianity evolved by German transcendentalism, and which is often as great a contrast to the simplicity of the Gospel as the dogmas of the most ecclesiastical of Christian churches. The Infinite must no doubt enter into the constitution of every Christian faith; and for that reason the distance between Pantheism and any other form of Theism does not appear to me so great as it does to some persons; certainly does not sanction the persecution of the supposed Pantheist, as in the cases of Bruno, Vanini and Spinoza.

HARRINGTON. Every theology which is founded on or allied with natural theology—and this I take to be true of all the higher religious thought of our time—must contain a greater or less proportion of Pantheistic elements. The ordinary language of Christians is saturated with *Pan* ideas, though disguised in other tongues. *E.g. Al*-mighty and other divine attributes into which *all* enters. So again we have *omniscience*, *omni*-presence, etc. Both the Old and the New Testament contain similar Pantheistic implications, though they are commonly disregarded. The 139th Psalm could only have been written by one whose inclinations were Pantheistic. The well-known words, 'In Him we live, and move and have our being,' also tend to Pantheism. Bruno has its sentiment in numberless passages of his works.

MISS LEYCESTER. That is what angers me in calling to mind the persecutions of such men as Bruno and Spinoza, whose conceptions of Deity, if duly investigated, are only the metaphysical form of the Infinite of Nature; so that the inevitable sublimity and extent of their ideas are proclaimed unsound by

beings whose notions of God are relatively so limited, insignificant and unworthy. What a grim mockery of justice, that a man who thinks of the Supreme Being only as a somewhat enlarged reflection of himself—whose very *anthropo*-morphism is an ἑαυτῷ morphism, *i.e.* not a generalization from all that is noblest in collective humanity—should be allowed to brand and burn as a heretic his more comprehensively minded brother, who cannot bring God within the ordinary limits of personality, but feels compelled to employ a term inclusive of all space, all time, all being.

ARUNDEL. I am too susceptible of the Divine in Nature and of the infinity of the universe to wish to be hard upon Pantheists, still the idea of the Supreme Being as a person, whose will is as free as His power is unlimited, appears to me as a *sine quâ non* of the highest type of religion. I cannot pray to, or converse with, a mere blind, aimless Force, or a necessity undetermined by moral attributes; and though the Atheism of Pantheism is, I grant, more justifiable than that of complete negation; still so far as the Being who answers to the best conceptions I can form of Him is concerned, it is only Atheism after all.

HARRINGTON. Well, if Bruno was heterodox, his was a heterodoxy of excess rather than defect; just as All-God is related to Some-God, and therefore on the approved principle that it is safer to believe too much than too little, ought to have been condoned.

MISS LEYCESTER. Few things are in my opinion more repellent than the selfish mercantile way in which some Christians assess their beliefs—apparently regarding them as so many investments—so that the more numerous their creeds and dogmas, the larger becomes their capital, and the greater the amount of their expected interest. Indeed, superstitious Roman Catholics seem to deal with their faith as with their practice; and to be intent on laying up a supererogatory store of beliefs as well as of works.

TREVOR. In theory heterodoxy has nothing to do with excess or defect. It is the departure in *any* direction from a given standard. In practice, however, the supposed error of

defect has always been thought more dangerous than that of excess; at least it has generally been treated with greater severity. The reason of this has long puzzled thinkers. One of the greatest English thinkers of this century, Bailey of Sheffield, has suggested this reason for the unequal estimate. 'Is it that we feel a sort of superiority at perceiving the absurdity of what others believe; and on the other hand are mortified when anybody else appears to arrogate the same superiority over ourselves?' To me this suggestion seems too recondite. I should rather account for the fact by connecting it with the common opinion of which even Pascal approved, that it is better to believe too much than too little. Hence a man who holding the orthodox faith, adds to it any amount of fantastic ornamentation or superstition, is not held thereby to endanger his salvability; whereas, he who subtracts from the accepted standard is thought to do this. In all religious development there is, as we have seen, a tendency to excess; though excess in one direction will generally be productive of a defect in another. Take *e.g.* much of the ecclesiastical Christianity of our time—it may be called godless or Atheistic so far as the First Person of the Trinity is concerned. I may add that, provided extreme idealism be avoided, I quite agree with Mrs. Harrington in reprobating the prevailing tendency to make Christianity a petty, accidental, sacrificial sectarianism, having little affinity with Nature or intellectual progress, instead of dwelling upon its universal and eternal aspects. The mischiefs which arise from this contracted view of the purposes Christianity was intended to subserve seem to me very great.

Miss Leycester. Thanks to his idea of unity or oneness, Bruno must have been one of the first thinkers of modern times who grasped the notion of the universe as an orderly governed whole—a cosmos. What an enormous transformation of feeling must have been created by the representation of the numberless worlds of modern astronomy—regulated, almost certainly, by the same laws—perhaps even peopled by similar inhabitants as our own.

Arundel. That reminds me that Bruno's main tendencies being synthetic rather than analytic, we ought to be careful

in describing him as a skeptic. The aim of a skeptic is division and disruption.

TREVOR. No doubt, but I have already admitted that Bruno's skepticism was only partial. His analysis prepared the way for his synthetic idealism, though, as we saw, he never regarded the latter as complete demonstrable truth.

HARRINGTON. Another department, besides the cosmical, into which Bruno introduced his grand unison, was that of philosophy, in which his views have been expanded and elaborated by his disciple, Schelling. With the grand idea of the real identity of human reason with the divine, he had no difficulty in perceiving that human thought or philosophy with all its outward varieties, constituted a single One;[1] an intellectual cosmos corresponding with and forming part of the physical (not a chaos, as some of our skeptics have termed the former). Like the two greatest Germans that ever lived, Goethe and Humboldt, Bruno joined in an indivisible whole the metaphysical and poetic with the cosmical and natural aspects of the universe; so we may ask of him as Humboldt does of Goethe: 'Who has more eloquently excited mankind to solve the holy problem of the universe, and to renew the bond which, in the dawn of mankind, united together philosophy, physics and poetry?'[2]

MISS LEYCESTER. Whereas now in the mature age of mankind we have physics and philosophy entirely divorced from poetry. For my own part I wish we could bring back that antiquated and exploded notion, as I suppose we must call it, which Bruno and other metaphysical physicists have held. I mean the *Anima Mundi*. With all deference to Auguste Comte and the scientists of modern times, I think it is not only a mistake, but absolute cruelty to deprive us of those nice metaphysical concepts, so poetically expressive, so delightfully vague and comprehensive—which if they did not wholly cover, served at least to veil our ignorance of the secret causes which dominate in Nature; whereas modern science leaves them in all their naked, hideous deformity. When, *e.g.* I want to know the

[1] Schelling, *Werke*, iv. p. 242, etc.

[2] Humboldt, *Cosmos* (Bohn's Trans.), ii. 439.

secret power which paints the various hues of flowers, it is but a small satisfaction of my curiosity to learn that the whiteness of the lily or the blue of the violet are produced by subtle chemical influences, which the soil, the air, and the sunshine exercise on the organization of the plant; but which we cannot comprehend. Whereas tell me of an *Anima Mundi* filling and animating every part of creation, which guides planets in their courses, and paints each flower that blooms with its own colour, my imagination—for there is not much room for intellect in tracing operations which, in any case, must be incomprehensible — finds a fuller satisfaction, and the unity pervading every part of creation a better exponent. Some day, perhaps, all the various physical forces may be found to be varieties of one great universal force; then I have no doubt the *Anima Mundi* will be welcomed back again, as a vivid designation of such a Force, and a fair description of its mode of operation.

TREVOR. Meanwhile, you must, I fear, be satisfied with physical laws, and the tardy prosaic methods of experimental observation, whenever you want to be really scientific. For purely poetical purposes you must do, what most of our poetic writers on Nature have learned to do, *i.e.* make the *Anima Mundi*, or some metaphysical equivalent, your Pegasus—to be kept in the stable and fed on gilded oats—when you have no congenial work for him; but ready to be brought out, bitted, saddled and mounted whenever you feel inclined for some aerial expedition, or are bent on contemplating Nature from a metaphysical or fetishistic point of view. But what with a lengthy paper and long discusssions, we have exceeded our usual time, so we will adjourn.

* * * * *

VANINI.

'The notion that metaphysical skepticism, even at the utmost length to which it ever has been, or is capable of being carried, has for its logical consequence atheism, is grounded on an entire misapprehension of the skeptical argument, and has no *locus standi* except for persons who think that whatever accustoms people to a rigid scrutiny of evidence is unfavourable to religious belief.'

J. S. Mill, *Examination of Sir Wm. Hamilton*, p. 211.

'Nella filosofia del Risorgimento lo spirito comincia a liberarsi dal medio evo e apparecchia gli elementi propri della filosofia moderna, spiegando due nuove potenze; la critica delle fonti o presupposti, naturali e sopranaturali, della conoscenza (*scetticismo*) e la contemplazione di Dio nella natura (*naturalismo*).'

Spaventa (B.), *Saggi di critica*, p. 111.

'Omnes autem qui veritatem tueri sine armis voluerunt, misere periere.'

Vanini, *Dialogues*, p. 360.

'Natur und Geist—so spricht man nicht zu Christen
Desshalb verbrennt man Atheisten,
Weil solche Reden höchst gefährlich sind.
Natur ist Sünde, Geist ist Teufel.
Sie hegen zwischen sich den Zweifel
Ihr missgestaltet Zwitterkind.'

Goethe, *Faust*, p. ii.

CHAPTER V.

VANINI.

DR. TREVOR. Vanini,[1] whom we discuss to-night, is, I am sorry to say, the black sheep of our flock.

ARUNDEL. Oh! I thought they were all black, Doctor! that, like the inmates of a prison or a reformatory, their blackness

[1] On the subject of this chapter, the following are the authorities consulted and quoted. Of Vanini's own works there are now extant:—

1. *Amphitheatrum Æternæ Providentiæ* Divino Magicum Christiano-Physicum—Astrologico-Catholicum, adversus veteres Philosophos, Atheos, Epicureos, Peripateticos, Stoicos, etc. Lugduni, 1615.

2. Julii Cæsaris Vanini Neapolitani Theologi, Philosophi et Juris utriusque Doctoris *de Admirandis Naturæ Reginæ Deæque Mortalium Arcanis.* Lutetiæ, 1616.

Œuvres Philosophiques de Vanini par M. X. Rousselot. Paris, 1842.

This, the only translation of Vanini into a modern language, contains the whole of the Amphitheatre, and selections from the Dialogues. It is by no means free from inaccuracies.

La Vie et les sentiments de Lucilio Vanini, par D. Durandus. Rotterdam, 1717.

Apologia pro Jul. Cæsare Vanino, Neapolitano-cosmopoli, 1712.

This work, which was anonymous, was written by Arpe, a Danish philosopher and liberal thinker. See Adelung, Supplement to Jöcher, *ad voc.*

V. Cousin *Fragments Philosophiques, Mod.*, vol. i. pp. 1–99.

Niceron, *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire des Hommes Illustres*, xxvi. pp. 371–385.

B. Telesio, *ossia studi storici su l' idea della Natura nel Risorgimento Italiano* di F. Florentino, ii. 211, etc.

Gli Eretici d'Italia. Discorsi di Cæsare Cantù, iii. p. 72, etc.

Giulio Cesare Vanini e i suoi Tempi da R. Palumbo. Napoli, 1878.

Giulio Cæsare Vanini ed i suoi biografi. F. Fiorentino *Nuova Antalogia*, Sept. 15th, 1878. (It may be added that this paper on Vanini was mostly written in 1876. It is no small gratification to the author to find that his views on Vanini and Cousin's unworthy treatment of him, are quite confirmed by one of the leading historians of philosophy in Italy at the present time. A few additions suggested by Palumbo's work and Fiorentino's paper, have been subsequently incorporated into the text.) The historians who have treated him most fully are Brücker, Bühle, Tennemann, Ritter, and Carrière. With the exception of the *Dict. des Sciences Philosoph.*, the articles in biographical dictionaries are not worth referring to.

was their main recommendation, at least their chief title to *our* notice.

Miss Leycester. I must object to your unworthy comparison, Mr. Arundel. A flock which comprises such members as Sokrates, Augustine, Descartes, Huet and Pascal cannot fairly be stigmatised as 'black,' supposing the term to imply moral reprobation. The utmost that can be said of Skeptics, as related to the rest of mankind, is that they are eccentrics; but for my part, I am strongly inclined to believe that the exact boundary line between eccentricity and concentricity is as difficult to draw in the case of the mental as of the physical products of Nature. A skeptic, even of an extreme kind, is not a whit more extravagant or 'bizarre' than a bat or ornithornychus among animals, or the 'carnivorous' order among plants.

Trevor. It is not Vanini's skepticism that I object to; so far as that goes, it is of course meritorious. But he has acquired an ill fame as a vain, superficial, feather-pated hanger-on on the skirts of philosophy; though there seems to be no adequate reason for the charge. However, his most atrocious martyrdom, and the constancy with which he suffered, has helped partly to retrieve his character.

Miss Leycester. Partly! Oh, Dr. Trevor, is that all you can say? 'Wholly,' I should say, and more too. A martyrdom like Vanini's is surely an ample atonement for any amount of philosophical or theological lapse.

Trevor. For philosophical no doubt; for philosophy has never burdened herself with an unattainable ideal of certainty, and imposed it on her followers under the high-sounding name of 'orthodoxy.' As to theological error, that is altogether another matter. . . . I presume you are aware that Vanini is commonly supposed to have been an Atheist.

Miss Leycester. So have several of our skeptics—Cornelius Agrippa and Joseph Glanvill for instance. I see that M. Rousselot, whose translation of Vanini you have lent me, thinks he was not an Atheist, but only a skeptic. I have carefully read Rousselot's book, and am inclined to share that opinion.

Harrington. To an accusation so general, and coming for

the most part from Vanini's enemies, we need pay no attention. Indeed, I do not know any weapon in the arsenal of religious dogmatism, which I fear contains more vituperative epithets than logical arguments, whose edge has been more blunted by indiscriminate use than this same imputation of Atheism. At present the term may be said to be completely emptied of all serious contents, and to signify only the rage of those who use it. Catholics have hurled it against Protestants, and Protestants, with just as much reason, have thrown it back again. It has been affixed to unbeliefs which now-a-days would be generally considered meritorious. Disbelief in witchcraft, spirits, as well as in the real presence, episcopal government, apostolical succession,[1] etc., have all been in turn branded with the imputation.

TREVOR. The *rationale* of this, as of similar misuses of terms, is that they are inferred by hasty and partial induction; and the inference is assumed to have what from its nature it cannot have—a demonstrative necessity. Because $2+2=4$ it no doubt follows that $4+4=8$, but because my personal belief in a Deity is founded upon certain premisses, it does not follow that every similar belief must be based upon the same premisses, nor that these premisses must in every case lead up to the same belief; practically no accusation can be more difficult to prove than that of Atheism. I have known a scientist whose conception of Deity hardly amounted to more than an abstraction of wisdom or order, yet possessed with profounder reverence for his impersonal Ideal than many an unreflecting

[1] Cf. *e.g.* Dugald Stewart's *Works*, vol. i. p. 378.—Servetus maintained that Trinitarianism necessarily involved Atheism. On the recklessness with which the charge of Atheism has been imputed by religious controversialists, comp. Arpe, *Apologia pro Jul. Cæs. Vanino*, pp. 21 28. Apropos of the accusation against Vanini, Professor Fiorentino well observes: 'L' accusa d' atheismo è la più facile a scagliare, ed un certo fondamento non manca mai. In sostanza chi non concepisce Dio a modo mio, per me è nè più, nè meno che un ateo. Così si spiega, perchè i primi Christiani passavano per atei agli occhi de Gentili; perchè Ario era chiamato ateo da Attanasio; perchè Cartesio poteva essere accusato d' ateismo per le Meditazioni Filosofiche, ch' erano state composte apposta per provare l' esistenza di Dio. Alla Camero si chiamava ateo chi seccava inesorabilmenti il prossimo con discorsi lunghi e noiosi; e tra le forme d' ateismo è forse questa la più ricca di proseliti e perciò la più formidabile.'—*Nuov. Ant.*, p. 206.

theologian, whose notions if analysed would reveal a painful extent of crude anthropomorphism.

ARUNDEL. For that matter a man might, I suppose, cherish reverence for 'the Unknown,' which is the last 'idôlon' to which modern science, like ancient Athens, has erected a shrine, but I cannot conceive how personal affection, trust and confidence can be placed on mere abstractions. Some well-defined and distinct personality appears to me an absolute *sine qua non* of any conception of Deity intended for humanity in general. A God that I cannot pray to or converse with is to me no Deity at all. Still I do not want to measure the mental processes and capacities of all men by what I conceive to be the limitations and conditions of my own.

TREVOR. I think you, in common with most theologians, exaggerate the difficulty of revering an abstract quality, as well as the difference between such a reverence and the worship which Christianity teaches us to offer to God. It seems to me that men frequently love and worship what is in reality only an abstraction. In ordinary cases of friendship, *e.g.* a man often loves or respects his friend for some particular attribute he conceives him to possess, his wisdom, learning, kindness, piety, or what not. Other points in his character which do not commend themselves to him he will naturally ignore. In such a case he might be said to love an abstraction Pascal, you know, maintained that we never love any man, but only his qualities.[1]

HARRINGTON. But such an abstraction or quality is embodied in a physical concrete form, and *ipso facto* is no pure abstraction. You have frequently seen and conversed with your friend, you have watched his smiles and kind looks, or have listened to his wise discourse. Although you may prefer some of his qualities to others, and may try to detach them from the living personality to which they belong, it is after all the man: the individual whom you see and converse with, that you actually love.

TREVOR. Well, let us take the argument out of the em-

[1] 'On n'aime donc jamais personne, mais seulement des qualités.'—*Pensées*, Ed. Faugère, i. p. 197.

barrassing restrictions of concrete forms. Take *e.g.* the Christian definition of God as Spirit, and the orthodox mode of considering His attributes as pure abstractions rather than as qualities or modes of existence—for we are taught to call God 'wisdom' rather than wise, 'love' rather than loving—there does not seem to be any very great distinction between these ideal conceptions and the abstractions under which a scientist will prefer to think of God, as *e.g.* abstract law, order, wisdom or goodness. Even taking the abstraction—the Unknown—of which I do not approve for the reason that it is a negative inference from facts and arguments which are positive—I can imagine worship of a very real and sincere kind offered at its shrine.[1] We may remember, too, that the so-called Athanasian Creed frequently terms God incomprehensible, and seems to take a morbid delight in pushing the incomprehensibility to its extremest limits.

Miss Leycester. By way of recalling our attention to our subject, I may point out that Vanini has some very apposite remarks on this very point. 'You ask of me,' he says, 'what God is? If I knew, I should be God, for no one knows God, nor what He is, except God Himself;'[2] and in another place, too long for quotation, he amplifies the same idea in a passage of glowing eloquence, which so far from savouring of Atheism, might easily pass for an extract from Bossuet or Fénélon.[3]

Trevor. 'Without prematurely discussing a point I have examined in my paper, I may hint that the evidence for Vanini's Atheism seems to me utterly inadequate. I should rather like the task of defending him from such an indictment, before any court possessed of a few elementary notions of justice, and should have no fear for the result.

Arundel. But though you are so sure, Doctor, there does not seem to be at all a consensus among critics on the subject. No doubt most of the hostile criticisms come from religious

[1] Cf. Clough's *ὕμνος ἄὔμνος*, *Poems*, p. 88:—

'I will not frame one thought of what
Thou mayest either be or not,
I will not prate of "thus" and "so,"
And be profane with "yes" and "no."'

[2] *Amphitheatrum*, p. 8.

[3] *Amphi.*, pp. 9 and 10.

adversaries, and are therefore to be received with caution; still other critics, Cousin, *e.g.* with an admitted tendency to favour a thinker who is, with all his demerits, a martyr to Free-thought, speak in depreciatory terms of both his intellectual and moral character. What especially puzzles me about Vanini is just this conflict of opinion among second-hand authorities. I hope his acknowledged works indicate a more definite judgment concerning him.

TREVOR. My paper will tell you what conclusions I have been able to gather from them. As to a definite and unanimous judgment among critics, I fear the discrepancy you speak of is only a reflex of the somewhat incongruous materials available for forming it. You have looked over his works, Harrington; what say you?

HARRINGTON. Anything more provokingly, and as it would seem wilfully, heterogeneous than the contents of Vanini's works, especially the *Dialogues*, I am quite unable to conceive. They contain enough pious and ordinarily accredited sentiment to establish a character for orthodoxy, and enough eccentric speculation to stamp him as a heretic; enough wit and subtle reasoning to prove him a philosopher, and enough absurd incoherent rambling to induce a doubt of his perfect sanity. His vanity too must have been immeasurable if it is true that he adopted the name 'Julius Cæsar' in order to designate his future destiny as the conqueror and supreme authority of the learned world.[1]

MISS LEYCESTER. From that failing no impartial critic can exonerate Vanini. You have a still more stupendous example of it in one of his Dialogues, where his disciple and interlocutor, apparently overwhelmed by his wisdom, addresses him, 'Either

[1] Compare the epigrams prefixed to his works, which are almost all a play on the name, and the high destiny it is supposed to indicate. The following seems the best of these:—

'Pompeium infestis devicit Julius armis:
Cæsar hic ingenio vicit Aristotelem.
Fortuna et varia stipatus milite vicit
Julius: hic solo vicit ab ingenio.
Ingenium quanto præstat furialibus armis
Tanto hic plus laudis Cæsare Cæsar habet.'
—Prefixed to the *Amphitheatrum.*

you are a god or you are Vanini,' to which the unabashed author merely replies, 'I am Vanini.'[1]

TREVOR. His vanity, so far as it pertains to himself and is not, what it often is, the flattery of disciples,[2] we must let pass. It is a failing of so many scholars, that we may almost term it: 'The last infirmity of learned minds.' Scaliger thought his enormous scholarship deserved the decoration of 'Julius Cæsar.' Indeed, there would seem to have been quite 'a run' on the name among the doctors of Naples and Padua in the sixteenth century. I find from a note in Settembrini's *Lectures*, that in the same register of the former University in which Vanini is recorded as having taken his Doctor's Degree on June 1st, 1606, there are many names which are (apparently) self-ennobled by the addition of 'Julius Cæsar.'[3] Perhaps the name of the victorious Roman was adopted to signify the triumph of the new-made Doctors over the scholastic lore and Aristotelian dialectics with which they had to strive for the mastery in those days. In Vanini's case, however, 'Julius Cæsar' is conclusively shown to have been his baptismal name, while 'Lucilius' was a patronymic;[4] so that the story to which you allude of his adoption of the name in order to indicate an expectation of victory over the learning or religion of Europe, is proved to have been a gross fabrication. But singular as the name 'Julius Cæsar Vanini' may appear to us, it was shared by others besides our skeptic, for he expressly complains that another individual of the same name had surreptitiously laid claim to certain works he had composed.[5]

ARUNDEL. Well, Doctor, if you defend Vanini's inordinate

[1] *Dialoghi*, p. 409. Rousselot Trans. p. 261.

[2] Comp. *e.g. Dial.*, p. 220 where this immoderate laudation is reproved by Vanini.

[3] *Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana*, iii. p. 409 note—'questo nome di Giulio Cesare occorre comunissimo fra i laureati di quel tempo.'

[4] Comp. Settembrini, loc. cit. 'Egli si dice di Lecce; e come Giordano Bruno si diceva *Nolanus*, egli si disse *Lycius*, ed anche *Lycisius*. Ed eccovi il nome di *Lucio* e di *Lucilio* che taluni vollero dargli, accusandolo di averlo cambiato in quello ambizioso di Giulio Cesare.' But it is by no means certain that Vanini did not change his name on his last and fatal visit to Toulouse. He is called in the official documents connected with his trial 'Pompei,' 'Uscilio.' See below.

[5] *Dialoghi*, p. 493.

vanity, I presume you will not care to throw your ægis over his obsequiousness; I doubt whether in the annals of literary servility we have any parallel to his Dedication of his *Dialogues* to Marshal Bassompierre. It seems to me to border on profanity.

TREVOR. Read D'Israeli's chapter on the subject of Dedications in his *Curiosities of Literature*, and you will find examples couched in terms quite as extravagant as those employed by Vanini. No doubt the flattery in all such cases is somewhat nauseous; but the needy scholars of that, as well as of other and later periods, were not careful to measure the compliments and panegyrics they lavished on their Mecænases.

MRS. HARRINGTON. As I have not been able to 'read up' Vanini; I should like to know what the flattery was.

TREVOR. He tells Marshal Bassompierre, whose name he jocularly interprets as 'The Basis of Peter,' *i.e.* of the Papacy, that he need not celebrate the elegant beauty of his handsome person, inasmuch as not only a thousand heroines, fairer than Helen, were attracted by it, but it served to restrain the obstinacy of Atheists, and repress their nefarious efforts; for contemplating the splendour and majesty of his most exquisite countenance, they were compelled to admit that a trace of divinity existed in man.[1] . . . History does not record the number of Atheists whom Bassompierre's godlike beauty converted, but as to the 'Helens' whom it attracted it would seem that Vanini's estimate of them at 1,000 may be considerably below the mark. There is a passage in the Marshal's *Memoirs* which says that previous to his committal to the Bastille, he collected and burnt all his private papers; and among the rest he committed to the flames no less than 6,000 so-called 'love-letters'![2]

MISS LEYCESTER. Poor Vanini! A man with such a correspondence, and of such a kind, was a very ill-chosen Mecænas for a wandering philosopher.

[1] In a similar spirit of indiscriminate eulogy, Brantôme recommends those who are skeptical on the subject of miracles to look at the beauty of Marguerite of Alençon.

[2] See Review of Bassompierre's 'Memoirs' in *Retrospective Rev.*, vol. xiv. p. 91, or, his 'Life' in the *Nouvelle Biographie Generale.*

TREVOR. He, however, seems to have shown Vanini great kindness. His lot is the more interesting as he shared to a great extent the ill-fortune of his protegé. He was imprisoned in the Bastille by Cardinal Richelieu for twelve years; and was thus the victim of political jealousy and tyranny; just as Vanini was of religious fanaticism. . . . And now for my paper. . . .

So saying, Dr. Trevor commenced reading:—

Julius Cæsar Vanini, to give him the name which he himself has inscribed in the Registry of Doctors of the University of Naples,[1] was born at Taurisano, in the south-east extremity of Italy, in the year 1585. Of his parents we only know what he has himself told us in a few incidental allusions which occur here and there throughout his works. His father, Jean-Baptiste Vanini, was an agent or surveyor of Don Francis de Castro, Viceroy of Naples; and afterwards Ambassador of Spain at the Court of Rome—a man therefore of good social position; and, if we may credit the testimony of his more celebrated son, of considerable vigour and energy of character.[2] His mother, Beatrice Lopez de Noguera, was of Spanish origin and of a noble family. The vanity and restlessness, as well as the intellectual independence, which were conspicuous elements in our skeptic's character, may therefore have been hereditary.

The young Julius Cæsar soon manifested an extraordinary aptitude for study and investigation, which induced his father, on the completion of his elementary education, to send him to Naples[3] to

[1] This entry, which was unknown to Cousin and the other historians and biographers of Vanini, is as follows:—

'Prima die mensis Junii, 1606; *Ego Julius Cæsar Vanini ex civitate Licii spondeo voveo atque juro, sic me Deus adjuvet et hæc sancta Dei Evangelia.*'—Settembrini, loc. cit.

[2] Apropos of the dislike of eminent men to inaction, Vanini recounts a curious anecdote of his father on his death-bed, *Amph.*, p. 153, which Rousselot thus translates: 'Et Jean Baptiste, mon père, que je me plais à citer pour l'honorer, averti par les medicins qu'il allait mourir, et soupirant après l'immortalité qui allait le tirer de l'oisivete et de la faiblesse, se leva sur son lit en disant: "*Il convient que je meure debout.*"'—Trans., p. 94. The same dying words, with their accompanying action, are attributed to the Emperor Vespasian and the Jansenist St. Cyran.

[3] Most of Vanini's uncritical biographers, misled by Gramond, assert that he continued his education at Rome; but for this supposition there is no foundation. Prof. Fiorentino thinks that Gramond and the rest were deceived by the fact that a Julius Cæsar Vanini, a man of some repute, with whom the more celebrated Vanini complains that he was sometimes con-

study theology and philosophy. He tells us that his first master in theology was the Carmelite Barthelemé Argotti, whom he greatly eulogises, calling him the phœnix of preachers of his time.[1] His teacher in philosophy was John Bacon, 'the prince of Averroists,' as Vanini styles him, 'from whom I have learned to swear only by Averroes.' This was probably the celebrated John of Baconthorp,[2] Provincial of the English Carmelites, who died in 1346, and therefore two centuries before Vanini was born. Renan thinks that this is a deliberate falsehood on the part of Vanini; whom he accuses of endeavouring on all occasions to mislead his readers by claiming connexion with personages and circumstances which do not belong to him.[3] While I agree with Renan so far that I think Vanini somewhat unreliable whenever his vanity or self-importance is concerned, I cannot suppose for a moment that he should have thought it possible to deceive his contemporaries on the subject of his teachers. John of Baconthorp was an influential thinker whose death two centuries previously was well-known, while Pomponazzi's death, nearly a century before Vanini wrote his first book, was a fact equally well attested. On no hypothesis consistent with his sanity can we assume that Vanini tried to resuscitate men so well-known to fame from the graves they had so long occupied, in order to claim them for his own living teachers. I prefer therefore the supposition, which Cousin also approves, that Vanini merely attributes to the writings of Baconthorp and Pomponazzi a principal share in the formation of his intellectual conclusions; and with regard to the latter we shall find this to be the fact. Vanini probably continued his studies in philosophy until, as we have seen, he graduated as Doctor (*Juris Utrius*) in 1606, when he was only twenty-one years of age. It would appear, from recent researches, that, some time or other Vanini took the vows of a Carmelite friar; indeed he describes himself in one place[4] as preaching as well as having taken priest's orders;[5] though whether this occurred before his removal from Naples to Padua is uncertain. We shall hardly be wrong in sup-

founded, resided at Rome. Comp. Fiorentino in *Nuova Antologia*, 15th Sept., 1878.

[1] 'Una cum præceptore meo Bartholomeo Argoto Carmelita, viro optimo et sapientissimo et in concionibus nostri sæculi phœnice idem ego vidi Neapoli in celeberrimo Ferdinandi Imperatori Musæo.'—*Dialoghi*, p. 205.

[2] Cf. Renan, *Averroes*, p. 318.

[3] *Averroes*, p. 420.

[4] *Amph.*, p. 234. Gui Patin also says (*Patiniana*, p. 52): 'Il a prêché à Paris en Italien en divers endroits.' He is, however, not a very trustworthy writer.

[5] *Dialoghi*, p. 446: 'Ignoscite pontificii canones presbytero medica scribenti.'

posing that it took place early in life, probably soon after his sojourn at Padua, where he graduated in theology. He describes his residence at the latter university as a period when his passionate ardour for study rendered the privations of poverty, and even the inclemency of winter, comparatively unfelt.[1] His favourite authors were Aristotle, Averroes, Pomponazzi and Cardan. For Aristotle he entertained almost unbounded veneration; he styles him, 'the father of human wisdom, the first and highest dictator of all sciences, and the venerable oracle of nature.'[2] Pomponazzi also he calls his 'Divine Teacher,' and his book *De Incantationibus* he terms 'a golden work.' With these guides it is needless to say that Vanini's studies were directed mainly to physical science and philosophy, and that he regarded the methods and teaching of the schoolmen with supreme contempt.

Having completed his education at Padua, he is said to have returned to his native town Taurisano, and to have spent some time at Naples, probably as an inmate of some Carmelite monastery. Father Mersenne, a bigoted and uncritical writer, who seems to have suffered from 'chronic Atheism on the brain,' is the untrustworthy source of a story that Vanini was expelled from a monastery for gross immorality.[3] It is not altogether improbable that, like Giordano Bruno, his mind outgrew the cloistered limits within which it was placed, and that prudence counselled a withdrawal from a sanctuary of ignorance and fanaticism. In this case Mersenne's story might have had what he regarded as a sufficient foundation; for there was no limit to the immorality he and other writers of the same class were wont to attribute to the faintest lapse from doctrinal orthodoxy. But we must bear in mind that all the events of Vanini's life are very uncertain. From 1606 till the publication of his first extant work in 1615, we have only incidental and scattered allusions as to the mode

[1] 'Amanti omnia calida. Nonne Patavi parvula contenti togula, hyberna frigore perfregimus? tantus mihi erat addiscendi ardor.'—*Dialoghi*, p. 351.

[2] *Amphitheatrum*, p. 197.

[3] Comp. Durandus, *Vie*, etc., pp. 50, 51, for the extract from Museum, which however Cousin was unable to verify (See *Fragments*, etc., p. 73, note 3). Mersenne's rule in all cases of suspected atheism was the following: '*Nec enim existimate ullum unquam hominem atheo pejorem inventurum*,' a succinct and easy code adopted by another mighty *malleus hæreticorum*, La Croze; and possibly cherished by not a few well meaning fanatics in our own day. Certainly, the ready transformation of theological to ethical demerit saves an enormous amount of trouble in the way of investigating evidence and accumulating proofs (comp. F. Fiorentino, *Nuova Antolog.*, loc. cit.). Only recently an enlightened and, in many respects, liberal divine of the English Church answered the question 'Who was Heine?' with the decisive *ex-cathedra* judgment, 'A wicked man'!!

in which he passed his time. Goaded, like Giordano Bruno, by the œstrus of intellectual restlessness, or possibly conforming to the custom of errant-scholarship which then prevailed, Vanini wandered from one country to another; taking up his abode for shorter or longer periods in most of the capitals and university towns of Europe. During this philosophical tour, at least for some part of it, he had as a companion a fellow-student whose acquaintance he had formed in Padua, Giovanni Maria Genochi, himself a man of some eminence, and the author of what Vanini calls an excellent little work on Grace and Free-will. While travelling with this friend, Vanini relates that, being on the point of embarking at Strasburg for a voyage up the Rhine, Genochi chanced to see a crow, and, being alarmed at the ill-omen, wished to disembark; but Vanini ridiculed his fears, and prevailed on him to pursue the voyage. This terminated happily; but we hear no more of Genochi. As to Vanini, we are told that he visited a considerable part of Germany, Bohemia, Holland and Switzerland, and subsequently settled for some time in France. During this journey he comported himself as a Catholic, and was accustomed to argue against Protestants. While at Strasburg he saw a portrait of Luther, and expresses his belief that if Cardan had seen it he would have been able to trace in his features the signs and forecasts of his apostasy.

Driven out of France by the malevolence of a certain Enrico Silvio, we next find Vanini in England. Until very recently this English episode in his career was a puzzle to his biographers. The only notice Vanini vouchsafes of it is that he abode in England for nearly two years, part of which period (forty-four days) he spent in prison for, according to his own statement, over-zealously defending Romanism.[1] Some light has lately been thrown on this event, as well as indirectly on Vanini's life and character, by the researches among our State papers of a fellow-countryman, Signor Palumbo.[2] From these sources, to which he was the first to call attention, we learn that Vanini, described as a Carmelite friar, started from Venice,

[1] *Amphi.*, pp. 117–118: 'Ego sane vel minimus militantis Ecclesiæ Tyro, cum anno præterito Londini ad Agonem Christianum destinatus essem, adeoque 49 diebus in latomiis tanquam palæstra quadam exercerer, eo eram pro Catholicæ Ecclesiæ authoritate defensanda effundendi sanguinis desiderio accensus et inflammatus.'—Comp. Durandus, *Vie*, p. 46; Niceron, *Memoires*, xxvi. p. 374. Arpe, Vanini's apologist, has well remarked that if Vanini had been put to death on this occasion, there would have been a saint the more in the Roman calendar. He was, however, unaware of Vanini's recantation in the Italian church in London in 1612.

[2] See Palumbo's work, p. 12, and comp. *Nuova Antologia*, Sept. 11th, 1878, pp. 222–224. See also *State Papers, Domestic, James I.*, vol. lxix.

probably in 1612, in company with another friar, called P. Giovanbattista; that he was recommended to friends in England by Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador at Venice, as well as by Sir Isaac Wake, a member of the same embassy. Sir Dudley's commendatory letter was addressed to a Sir somebody Chamberlain, Mayor of Canterbury, who was to have received the Italian strangers and introduced them to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Abbot). But arriving while the Mayor was absent, they themselves found means of gaining access to the Primate.[1] Vanini was thus received into the Archbishop's palace; while his brother-friar obtained, through the same prelate's influence, a post among the dependants of the Archbishop of York. Only one reason can be assigned for this sudden promotion of Italian refugees and Carmelite friars to positions of honour and trust near the two chief prelates of the English Church, *i.e.* they were received as intending converts from Romanism. While at Venice the English ambassador had probably been attracted by the free utterances of the young Carmelite, which perhaps bore the appearance of an undeveloped or ill-regulated Protestantism. He ascertained that Vanini was attached somewhat loosely to the dogmatic system of his own Church, and was not prepossessed by the German Reformation. Whereupon he may have communicated to him the fact that in England there was a Church which had severed itself from Rome, and at the same time refused to accept the narrow-minded Protestantism of Geneva; and perhaps he offered the young friar letters to his English friends. A freer Church than Rome, and a broader and more cultured creed than Continental Protestantism, was precisely what our young free-thinker desiderated. Accordingly he accepted the ambassador's offer, and was soon installed in Lambeth Palace. That this was the actual course of events is sufficiently shown by the next occurrence in Vanini's eventful life. On the 2nd of July, 1612, Sir —— Chamberlain wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that the two Carmelites had made public confession of their faith; had proclaimed their conversion from and abjuration of their ancient errors in the Italian church in London. He adds that he was sorry not to have been present on the occasion, that he had been wrongly informed of the time; but that he had heard that Vanini had distinguished himself by his learning, and his brother friar by his eloquence.[2] It is to be hoped that more information as to this interesting event will soon be forthcoming. One would gladly learn, if

[1] Letter of Chamberlain to Carleton, *State Papers*, vol. lxix., *ut supra*, under date June 17th, 1612.

[2] *State Papers, Domestic, James I.*, vol. lxx., No. 1, under date July 2nd, 1612.

possible, the terms of Vanini's recantation, as well as those of his admission into the English Church. It would also be of interest to know whether Abbot himself presided on this occasion. So much however is certain, and the fact seems to me particularly interesting, that for a part of his life Vanini was a member of the Church of England. His cordial relations with the Archbishop are shown by two letters still in existence, dated on the same day, the 9th of October, written respectively to Sir Dudley Carleton and Sir Isaac Wake, thanking them for their recommendations to England, and expressing his own satisfaction at the warm reception he had received from the Archbishop. To Sir I. Wake he adds, with an expression of thankfulness to God, that he is well and happy, greatly beloved by the most illustrious Monsignor the Archbishop, who continually retains him at his own table; and has given him hope of some day conferring on him a valuable post.[1] The happiness, as Prof. Fiorentino remarks, was of short duration. On the 13th of January, 1613, the Archbishop wrote to the Bishop of Bath that he had withdrawn his protection from Vanini, and that his brother friar had experienced the same fate from the Archbishop of York. The day after Sir —— Chamberlain wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that his two *protegées* were come to Canterbury to find him. They were in great difficulties, which he had for the time relieved.

The cause of this sudden change in Archbishop Abbot's attitude to Vanini I cannot at present ascertain. Unfortunately Signor Palumba, whom Prof. Fiorentino follows, merely cites the Archbishop's letter instead of giving it in full. Perhaps, as Prof. Fiorentino suggests, Vanini had not kept his tongue under proper restraint; or he may have inveighed against Protestant intolerance not less than that of Romanists; or perhaps the envy and jealousy of other members of the archiepiscopal *entourage* might have effected the ruin of the young foreigner. Certainly the Archbishop's well-known narrow-minded and semi-Calvinist sympathies, added to his domineering temper, must have made Vanini's relations with him a matter of considerable delicacy. We are reminded, in this part of Vanini's life, of the protection his fellow-countryman Giordano Bruno found in the house of the French ambassador in London. But it was no tolerant and large-hearted Castelnuovo who now inhabited Lambeth Palace.

Fallen from the good graces of English Protestants, Vanini and his companion had long become loathsome to the Catholics. A certain Biondi wrote to Sir. D. Carleton, on March 17th, 1613, that the

[1] *State Papers, Domestic, James I.*, vol. lxxi., No. 13 and 14, under date Oct. 9th.

Spanish ambassador was in a rage against Vanini and his accomplices on account of his apostasy, and threatened him with the stake. For some months Vanini appears to have been reduced to great straits, and to have lived on the casual charity of acquaintances.[1] For some unknown reason, possibly a decree of the Court of High Commission, in which Abbot presided *ex officio*, Vanini was, in the early part of 1614, committed to the Tower, where he remained forty-nine days. His own admission that it was over-zeal for Romanism that caused his committal, seems to point to some hasty or unguarded expression of contempt for Anglican Protestanism — precisely one of those scarecrow crimes of which the Court of High Commission took cognizance;[2] and during Abbot's reign that tribunal acquired an especial notoriety for arbitrary and illegal processes.[3] But whatever the actual cause, Vanini was destined to a bitter proof that the tolerance of Anglicanism was not a whit superior to that of Rome or Geneva; and found, to his lasting chagrin, that the experiment on which he had been put by Sir Dudley Carleton, had terminated very disastrously. From the Tower he was ultimately released, through the good offices of Morari, chaplain to the Venice ambassador, by whose help he probably found his way back to France, about the middle or end of 1614.

On his return to the Continent, Vanini seems to have made his way through France and Switzerland to Geneva. Here he remained some months, employing himself as a teacher of philosophy. Among his disciples was Giacomo Doria, a youth of great genius and well versed in mathematics, of whom he makes mention in both his works. This circumstance is of some importance, as introducing us to another and still more illustrious friend of Vanini. This was the celebrated poet, Giambattista Marino, who wrote on the occasion of Doria's marriage the epithalamium commencing:—

> 'In riva al mar sonoro
> Che bacia il lembo alla città di Giano.'

What makes Vanini's friendship with Marino, to which Professor

[1] *State Papers, Domestic, James I.*, vol. xxxv. Letter of Chamberlain to Carleton, under date Nov. 25th, 1613.

[2] Hallam has pointed out that the primary model of this iniquitous tribunal was the Inquisition itself. *Const. Hist.*, i. p. 201.

[3] *State Papers, ut supra*, vol. lxxvi, under date Jan. 27th, 1814, where from a letter of Lake to Carleton, enclosing a letter of Archbishop Abbot to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, we learn that the two friars 'publicly renounced Popery, but not being promoted as they hoped, now declare that they were always papists at heart, and are preparing to return to Rome.' From a subsequent entry in the same vol., No. 18, and under date Feb. 3rd, 1614, we learn that the friars 'are committed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to safe custody.'

Fiorentino was the first to draw notice,[1] a matter of considerable moment in an estimate of his life and character, is the fact that Marino is the chief exponent of the Naturalism so common to Italian thinkers of that time, and which finds expression in Vanini's *Dialogues*. Hence Vanini's prose and Marino's poetry illustrate each other, and throw light on the standpoint of thinkers who were sometimes urged to extremes of Naturalism by the unnatural and inhuman asceticism of Romanism.[2] This standpoint is clearly set forth in a *resumé* of the spirit of Marino's chief work (*Adone*), contained in Professor de Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, and which I quote in the original: 'L'amore, principio della generazione, è anima del mundo, è la corona della natura e dell' arte; in esso s' inizia, in esso si termina il circolo della vita. Venere e Adone è la congiunzione non solo spirituale, ma corporale del divino e del l' umano; è l'amore sensuale che investe tutta la natura, cielo e terra.'[3]

Although the opinions thus indicated may be taken to express a latitude with which we in the present day feel but little sympathy, we must remember that they by no means prove the practical licence of those who held them. They were common, as we know, to all the foremost thinkers both of France and Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some of them being men of the utmost purity of life, and even gravity of demeanour. In fact, they were part of the reactionary Protestantism born of and nourished by the extravagant dogmas of Ecclesiasticism. It need not excite wonder that they were employed to undermine Vanini's character, as we shall find when we come to his trial, by unscrupulous theologians,[4] who are always apt to impute extreme practical consequences to speculative aberrations; but that any man having some claim to the noble title of philosopher should have joined his enemies in making Vanini's Naturalism a synonym for unrestrained vice, may well seem marvellous.

Vanini's stay at Geneva could not have lasted long, for the year after, 1615, we find him at Lyons, where he published the first of his extant works—the *Amphitheatre*, and in March, 1616,[5] he is in Paris,

[1] *Nuova Antologia*, etc., p. 196.

[2] Comp. the passages collected by Fiorentino, loc. cit., p. 196, from Vanini's *Dialogues*.

[3] Vol. ii. 254–255. Compare also Settembrini's summary of the work *Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana*, ii. 275–286.

[4] Burckhardt observes, on the indefiniteness of the charge of Epicureanism, that the Inquisition probably used it against men who could not be reached by a more specific accusation. See *Cultur der Rennaissance*, ii. 268, Germ. Ed. The name was used as synonymous with free-thinker.

[5] See *Dialogues*, p. 446.

whence, after some slight supervision of the publication of the *Dialogues*, he took the last stage of his many wanderings—his ill-fated journey to Toulouse. His occupation during these latter years was of that discursive irregular kind which we have met before in the cases of Cornelius Agrippa and Giordano Bruno. Occasionally employed as a teacher of youth in private families, sometimes opening a school or lecture-room on his own behalf—associating and corresponding with the more free-thinking professors of different universities—and writing and publishing books on different subjects; for the two works that have come down to us form but a small portion of his writings. An absurd story, possibly suggested by his many wanderings and occasional lectures, was put in circulation, which gravely affirmed that before starting on his travels, Vanini entered into a compact with eleven companions of similar sentiments, to propagate atheism throughout Europe as so many apostles of Antichrist. This is only one of several grotesque fabrications to which the malice and industry of his enemies gave currency, and which were readily enough believed in an age when free-thought, even of a moderate kind, was deemed a sufficient proof of every extreme of senseless and profane conduct, and when no falsehood was too heinous or improbable to be adduced in the supposed interests of ecclesiastical dogma.

Vanini published at Lyons in 1615, as I have just observed, the first of his remaining works, bearing the bombastic and almost untranslatable title of, *The Divino-Magical Christiano-Physical and Astrologo-Catholic Amphitheatre of Eternal Providence against Ancient Philosophers, Atheists, Epicurœans, Peripatetics and Stoics.* The object of this work is ostensibly the defence of Christianity against those who have not so much assailed it, as put forth at different times teachings which Vanini considers irreconcileable with its doctrines. For us it may be described as a collection of discursive arguments on those moot points of theology and natural philosophy which we have seen brought forward by Pomponazzi and Giordano Bruno—questions which might be termed in more than one sense the 'burning questions' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Vanini sets out with the proof of the existence of God, in which he criticises Aristotle and Averroes from the point of view of Christian theism, and displays a leaning, which is occasionally perceptible throughout the work, to cabalistic mysticism.[2] As to the nature of God, he adduces, like so many of his brother-skeptics, the different opinions which philosophers have propounded on the subject. The infinity of God, he says, renders every adequate conception of Him by finite

[1] *Amphitheatre*, p. 7.

intelligences impossible. So far from denying providence, he insists somewhat gratuitously on its existence *prior to the creation*, as well as afterwards. This is one example among many of a certain redundant orthodoxy which appears to some of his critics, *e.g.* Cousin, as suspicious; and denoting an ill-dissembled irony—though in this and other cases it may be no more than the excessive subdivision of the Divine attributes, and the endeavour to assimilate a supposed pre-creation state of things to that with which we claim acquaintance, which is so characteristic of the school-philosophy. Vanini objects to such a view of creation as would render the volition and personal activity of the Creator superfluous. He therefore denies the eternal existence of the world as affirmed by Aristotle, though his own pantheistic leanings, and his assertion of a metaphysical creation prior to the physical, for the reason that the existence of the universe was always *in act* with God, diminishes the force of such denial. The atomic theory of Demokritus and others he opposes, as substituting accident and chance for law and order. Cardan's notion of the self-movement of the heavenly bodies he tries to refute by maintaining that they are moved by Divine arrangement. He also objects to Cardan's opinion that the heavens move on their own account, not on ours, for the conclusive reason that if this were the case, they would rest, for the end of motion is rest. Throughout the work we have similar illustrations of the metaphysical physics current in those days, Cardan *e.g.* held that the material of the heavens is more noble than that of man, for the heavens are incorruptible. This Vanini denies, and says that the matter of the heavens is not different from that of man or a beetle. One matter can only differ from another by reason of the form which it assumes.[1] He adopts the usual distinctions of Aristotle and the schoolmen as to first and second matter, and the respective characteristics in each case; but he denies that it is a property of the first matter to desire a variety of 'forms,' and believes that the same Divine mind who made the matter projected the forms, each for its own kind. Another part of his argument on creation proves Divine Providence from the responses of the oracles.[2] In this particular he differs from Machiavelli (Prince of Atheists, as he terms him), and also from his master, Pomponazzi. He thinks that the heavens,

[1] *Amphitheatre*, p. 26: 'Cœli materia diversa non est a materia hominis vel scarabæi. . . . neque enim intelligo quomodo materia una ab alia diversa sit, nisi per advenientem formam.' This was also the opinion of Bruno. It may be said to have attained its full philosophical maturity in the system of Spinoza.

[2] *Amph.*, p. 35; cf. *Dialoghi*, p. 379, where, however, their prognostications are referred to sacerdotal impostures. *Dial.* p. 391. See below.

which he calls 'the universal instrument of high intelligences,' may give true oracles; though even in this case he would regard them only as signs, not as causes of human events. His anecdotes of supposed true oracles prove Vanini to have been by no means exempt from the superstitions of his time. He relates among others, a story of a child just born denouncing calamities on its father, and then dying.[1] Besides its attestation by oracles, Providence is further proved by the answers of the Sybils,[2] and by the miracles of the Old and the New Testaments. On the latter head he vigorously opposes Machiavelli's opinion that miracles were devised by princes and priests on purpose to deceive people, as well as the opinion of Pomponazzi that the effective cause of miracles was either the stars or our own imagination. He also avows his dissent from the Horoscope of Religions, which we have seen Pomponazzi maintained. Lutheranism, as the latest phase of Christianity, was submitted to astrological tests by Vanini's contemporaries; and as Englishmen we ought to feel an interest in knowing, on the high authority of Cardan, that the English schism is to be ascribed to the fateful influence of 'Mars and Mercury predominating, out of Aries, over Great Britain.' Though, as the same high authority makes Judæa also subject to Aries, it is not unreasonable to ask, as Vanini does, why its predominance did not produce the same effect in that country.[3] Equally unfounded does he regard the opinion of Pomponazzi as to the power of the imagination to produce certain kinds of marvels; for whereas the latter attributed the stigmata of St. Francis to natural causes, Vanini here dissents from his master, and assures us that he has written against Luther's sceptical explanation of the stigmata, viz., that they were caused by St. Francis himself.[4] Vanini also avows his belief that the Church is the true arbiter between genuine and false miracles, and professes his readiness to accept her decisions as final. Repeated protestations of this kind occur through the book; though, as we shall find, their sincerity can be admitted only on the somewhat questionable basis of twofold truth.

Vanini examines at some length the supposed opinions of the atheist Diagoras, and does his utmost to refute them; nor is there the faintest trace of insincerity or half-heartedness in his criticism. He

[1] A story of a precisely similar kind went the round of American and English papers in the year 1875!!

[2] *Amph.*, p. 42. Comp. chapter on the same subject, *Dialoghi*, p. 392.

[3] *Amph.*, p. 64.

[4] Recent researches in mental physiology seems to show that the famous stigmata of St. Francis may possibly have been natural, and produced in the manner indicated by Pomponazzi in the fifteenth century. Comp. *e.g.* Dr. Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, pp. 689–690.

declines to accept, with Pomponazzi, the Stoic solution of the moral difficulties of atheism, viz. that virtue is its own reward, etc., and thereby may be said to exhibit an imperfect perception of the nature of ethical obligation. Indeed this fact might conceivably be regarded as some confirmation of the rumours circulated by his enemies, concerning the immorality of his life; and it accords with the more open Epicuræanism of the *Dialogues*; but on the other hand Vanini's distinct affirmation of future rewards and punishments is more ecclesiastically orthodox than Pomponazzi's implied denial of them. His answer to the Stoics is, that no agent is satisfied with the inherent beauty of its action, but only with the object for which it is undertaken. So, also, instead of accepting the dictum that vice is its own punishment, he refers to Scripture for proofs of the final punishment of the wicked; but he makes no attempt on the ground of justice to reconcile this belief with his doctrine of astrological fatalism; for most of the crimes and casualities of men he attributes to the horoscope of each individual. One of his replies to Diagoras is inconsistent with his belief, if genuine, in the final punishment of the wicked; for he alleges as a reason why God does not always punish sin, that he acts like a king who does not find it expedient at all times to punish the evil by which he is not personally affected; and God cannot be influenced by human evil, because *spirit cannot be affected by matter.*

Cousin prefers the following chapters on Protagoras to those in which Diagoras is criticised. 'If there is a God,' said Protagoras, 'whence comes evil?' 'I answer,' says Vanini, 'of our own free will.' But this clue to the solution of the problem is, as Cousin remarks, not followed up. In discussing the relation between divine fore-knowledge and human evil, Vanini shows himself as much puzzled as Pomponazzi. He sets forth the contradictions of the question in such terms as to make a reconciliation between them impossible. The different attempts to effect such a *rapprochement* he reviews, but finds them all unsatisfactory. Ultimately the question is solved, or at least hints of a solution are thrown out, by modifying its original terms; and Vanini, like so many rationalizing theologians, is compelled to limit the omnipotence and providence of God[1] in order to save his moral attributes as well as human responsibility. He also recognizes the beneficial aspects of evil in the strength and courage which continued struggle with it imparts. On similar principles Vanini argues against Cicero, for the freedom of the human will, as against a fatalistic view of providence. God's foreknowledge, he says, does not impose a necessity on our actions, because he knows them as future only in a

[1] *Amph.*, p. 91: 'Deus et Natura *de possibilibus* semper efficiunt quod est melius.'

free scope (in libera facultate) as they may, and not as they actually do, happen.[1]

Against the Epicuræans Vanini maintains the immortality of the soul; but it is as a disciple of Pomponazzi, and an advocate of twofold truth; as a Christian he believes, as a philosopher he does not,[2] but it is only fair to add that he argues on the subject, as if both his Christianity and his philosophy were enlisted in the cause of Church orthodoxy; and his evident earnestness on the question may be cited as one set-off to the many cases in which his defence of dogma almost seems purposely and needlessly weak. He also objects to the Epicuræan notion of the inaction of God; maintaining that if God exists He cannot be idle, any more than fire, if it exists, can avoid burning. Moreover, untiring activity is the well-known characteristic of the noblest beings, whether they are human or pure supersensual intelligences. This discussion with the Epicuræans again introduces what may be termed the chief topic of the book, *i.e.* the nature and extent of Providence. As usual, Vanini defends the ordinary conception of it, as both agreeable to the incessant activity of God, the highest Intelligence, and necessitated by what we know of the operation of His laws. On the latter point he maintains, against Averroes, that Providence has regard not only to general laws, but to their particular and detailed effects In fact, throughout the work, Vanini evidently wishes to be regarded as a defender of special Providence; though, as I have already remarked, he sometimes acknowledges and endeavours to provide for the difficulties involved in an unlimited interpretation of that doctrine.

In an age when astrology formed the basis, not only of physical but also of theological and ethical science—when the human intellect, like a crazy builder, tried to lay the foundation of its knowledge in the heavens, and to add sub-structures till it reached the earth—it would be absurd to expect a thinker like Vanini to be altogether free from its influence. We must be satisfied if we find him partially emancipated from the more slavish and degrading of its conclusions. This he evidently is, in spite of some reasonings which seem to point in a contrary direction. He vindicates, *e.g.* human free-will from astro-

[1] *Amph.*, p. 140.

[2] In making this avowal Vanini says that he is not ashamed, because he is carrying out St. Paul's precept, 2 Cor. x. 5. He also quotes St. Augustine's avowal, that he would not have believed the Gospel unless the authority of the Church had moved him, *Amph.*, p. 164. This quotation, for which Vanini refers to *De Bapt. Lib.*, iv. ch. 24, is to be found in the treatise 'Contra Epistolam Manichæi quam vocant Fundamenti, Liber unus. cap. v.' Ego vero Evangelio non crederem nisi me Catholicæ Ecclesiæ commoveret auctoritas. Comp. chap. on Augustine, *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. i.

logical fatalism, just as he defended it from predestination theories. Man, according to him, is not the hapless victim of the astral conjunctions which predominated at his birth. Our actions are the results of our volition; and this being immaterial cannot be controlled by celestial bodies which are material.[1] Indirectly, and by means of the senses, which are also material, a certain inclination of the will may be effected by the stars,[2] but no constraint. On the other hand he agrees with Ptolemy, 'The wise man will rule the stars.' Vanini shows himself equally solicitous in preserving the Divine will, manifested in creation, from the necessitarianism of Aristotle and the Stoics, making it subordinate only to the dictates of goodness and wisdom. On this subject of God's free agency he points out that Aristotle is inconsistent; for while he affirms in his physical works that God acts necessarily, he proclaims in his ethics the freedom of the human will —a proposition of an entirely opposite implication for, according to Vanini's reasoning—a necessary cause cannot produce contingent effects —so if God creates man by compulsion our human will cannot be free.

Such are the matters discussed and approximately the conclusions arrived at, in this remarkable book. Vanini sets himself to explore the vast amphitheatre in which human imbecility carries on its never-ceasing struggle with the insoluble problems of the universe, and within whose boundless domains there are so many Dædalian labyrinths and circuitous routes, so many obscure and unexplorable regions, so many dark and impenetrable paths, that losing his way is the inevitable fate of each hardy investigator. The mode in which Vanini conducts his research is a reflex of its subject. His *Amphitheatre* bears considerable resemblance to that of the moral universe, which he discusses; for its method, as well as its style, is difficult and involved, while its conclusions are determined only with hesitation and uncertainty. Hence, whatever merits his work can claim as an advance on the thought of his time, it cannot be said to possess many in respect of plan or ratiocination. Vanini's training was that of the schoolmen; and notwithstanding his own contempt for that philosophy, and his expressed determination to employ another and better method, his two remaining works, and especially the *Amphitheatre*, bear very distinct evidences of scholastic modes of ratiocination. On

[1] *Amph.*, p. 298.

[2] This modified or semi-astrological belief, according to which the stars suggested modes of human action, but did not control Volition, was shared by Dante: *Purg.*, xvi. 73.

'Lume v' è dato a bene, ed a malizia:
E libero voler; che, se fatica
Nelle prime battaglie col Ciel, dura;
Poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica.'

the other hand, spite of Vanini's scholastic method, and some small share in the astrological superstitions of his day, we are able to discern occasional gleams of a higher enlightenment. He argues, *e.g.* against the idea that woman is a monstrosity,[1] *animal occasionatum* in the barbarous jargon of the schools, and so sets himself against a large consensus of authority which had gravely decided that such was the fact. So again, when speaking of the providential design of monstrous creations, he objects to Cardan's notion that they imply sin in the parents, by quoting our Lord's dictum: 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents,' and says that their purport is to represent God as an admirable artist, who knows how to harmonize and unify so many diversities. He also points out that the beauty of Nature is a result of her endless variety; according to the poet:—

'Per tal variar Natura è bella.'

If he proceeds to add that monsters prognosticate strange events, this is only the admixture of frivolous and childish superstition with sound philosophy, which is a common and necessary feature of all the philosophical investigation of his time. Similarly; his argumentation, though tortuous and laboured, is by no means wanting in skill and acuteness. His refutation *e.g.* of realism[2] by an appeal to his individual consciousness, is perhaps the most convincing mode which a modern thinker could adopt for the same purpose.

Taking it as a whole, the *Amphitheatre* must be pronounced decidedly orthodox. This is admitted by most, even of Vanini's uncompromising foes.[3] The only fault which Cousin, who is by no

[1] 'Mulieres non esse homines' was one of the frivolous paradoxes, discussed in the middle ages, and for which its *double entendre* admirably qualified it; though even in the fuller sense of the proposition, it was quite in harmony with scholastic ratiocination that the sexual distinction should have become generic, and with monkish austerity that the supposed generic distinction should have been accepted as proved. Those who wish to see the many purposes to which this curious theme has been applied by Romanists and Protestants, are referred to Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Gedicous,' and comp. on the same subject Bartholmèss, *Jordanus Bruno*, i. 190, note 2. The imperfection of the fair sex was extended even to Nature, for the following conclusive reason which Bruno puts in the mouth of one of his peripatetic pedants:—

'Natura non può far cosa perfetta,
Poichè Natura femina vien detta.'—*Op. Ital.*, i., p. 230.
That Nature's imperfect is doubtful to no man
The reason is clear—she is only a woman.

[2] Comp. *Amph.*, p. 248.

[3] An exception must be made of his biographer, Durandus, who pronounces the *Amphitheatre* more dangerous than the *Dialogues*; all its orthodox statements being, according to him, *ironical*—a piece of criticism of which it is hard to determine whether its audacity or its intolerance is most marked.

means inclined to regard our skeptic with a favourable eye, can find in it is a certain emphasis of tone, an over-protesting, which is suggestive of conscious weakness, or deceit. Unfortunately the book has to be considered not by itself, but in connection with the *Dialogues*, which Vanini published in Paris the year after the publication of the *Amphitheatre*; and which most of his critics regard, though I think erroneously, as containing his final conclusions[1] on theology and philosophy. But before we pass on to consider this more-developed phase of Vanini's skepticism, I would call your attention to the ode of pantheistic praise and aspiration with which the *Amphitheatre* ends, and which represents its author in a devout and emotional frame of mind. He thus addresses the Supreme Being:—

'Of all existent things, Thou art both source and ending;
Of Thyself art fountain, origin, commencement;
Of Thyself as well art end and termination;
Yet equally without both ending and beginning.'

He describes his action:—

'To will is for Him His all supremest action,
His energy consists in unvarying volition;
He alone is great though unpossessed of quantity,
He alone is good though unendowed with quality.[2]

[1] Cousin and others lay stress on a passage of the *Dialogues* in which Vanini says of the *Amphitheatre*, 'Multa in eo libro scripta sunt quibus à me nulla præstatur fides. *Cosi va il mondo.*' 'Many things are written in that book to which I no longer give credence. *That is the way of the world.*' But a little attention to the context would have shown that Vanini is not here speaking of the general contents or arguments of the book, but of certain marvellous stories, *e.g.* a child uttering denunciations against its father on the day of its birth, for which stories Vanini had attempted in the *Amphitheatre* to find some natural or reasonable basis. In other parts of the *Dialogues* Vanini refers continually to the *Amphitheatre* for fuller explanations of points merely indicated in the former work. There is no doubt that the *Dialogues* mark a considerable advance in Naturalism and Free-thought; and it is the fact of this advance, and the liability of himself, in common with the rest of the world, to error which is denoted by the *Cosi va il mondo*, as well as by the proverb, *Questo mondo è una gabbia de matti*, 'This world is a prison of fools,' with which Alexander *caps* his master's depreciatory estimate of mankind. See *Dial.*, p. 428; Cousin, *Frag.*, p. 51. Compare the comment of Prof. Fiorentino, *Telesio*, etc., p. 218.

[2] This passage, as well as a considerable portion of the poem, is clearly borrowed from St. Augustine; who, next to Aquinas, was Vanini's most venerated authority among purely ecclesiastical writers: 'Sic intelligamus Deum, si possumus, quantum possumus, sine qualitate bonum, sine quantitate magnum, sine indigentia creatorem; sine situ præsidentem; sine habitu omnia continentem; sine loco ubique totum; sine tempore sempiternum; sine ullâ sui

Plenitude himself, of all things else the fulness,
Through all time the same, of all things the supporter,
To all things the source of motion and sustension,
All things being directed by His far-reaching vision.
Thee I implore—oh graciously regard me,
Bind me to Thee in adamantine fastenings,
That tie alone is the one and sole possession,
Which can give to mortals happiness supremest.'

And so on for seventeen stanzas[1] of mediocre poetry, but of ardent feeling and unexceptional theology—certainly not the kind of utterances we might expect from an atheist and blasphemer.

Coming now to the *Dialogues*, we turn over a new leaf in the intellectual, and unhappily in the personal, history of our subject. This work is entitled, '*Of the admirable secrets of Nature, the Queen and Goddess of Mortals.' Four books of dialogues between Alexander and Julius Cæsar, published with the approbation of the Sorbonne, Paris*, 1616. This, as its title indicates, is a work of entirely different purport from the *Amphitheatre*. Nor is this difference limited to subject matter and treatment. The circumstances of its composition and publication are altogether of another kind. Few of Vanini's biographers have noticed the curious address of 'the publisher to the reader' prefixed to the *Dialogues*, and yet it throws no small light on the origin of the book. We hence learn that the *Dialogues* were not written by Vanini, but by his disciples. They are a collection of discursive conversations embodying their master's opinions on those points of physical knowledge on which they at various times asked for information. We are not told whether they were written down at the time, or afterwards and from memory; but most probably the latter. Moreover, these clandestine records of Vanini's private teaching were published in an equally clandestine manner. The publisher

mutatione mutabilia facientem, nihilque patientem.' He adds, 'Quisquis Deum ita cogitat, etsi nondum potest omni modo invenire quid sit, pie tamen cavet quantum potest, aliquid de eo sentire quod non sit.'—*De Trin.*, L. v. ch. i. It may be noted that this conception of Deity as a convergence of antinomies, the 'indifference-point' of moral and physical antagonisms, is common to all metaphysical theologians. Cf. *e.g.* chapter on Bruno.

[1] These are translated by Cousin, loc. cit., pp. 43, 44, with the exception of the thirteenth stanza, of which he says, 'Nous n'avons pas traduit, faute de les entendre les deux derniers vers de cette strophe,' but the translation becomes easy by the emendation of an obvious misprint. Vanini's words are:—

'Tu fons perennis perstrepentes
Qui latices salientis ardent.'

The first word of the latter verse should manifestly be *Cui*. The translation will then be, 'Thou art the perennial fount for which the noisy, gushing water-jets are longing.'

assures us that, in his zeal for the public advantage, he had taken care to procure the inditing of these monuments of Vanini's wisdom by fitting persons; and in this way the sixty *Dialogues* containing the secrets of all philosophy had come into his hands. These *Dialogues* of miscellaneous contents he had afterwards submitted to two most trustworthy and learned men to be divided, according to their subjects, into four books. Willingly, says the publisher, they accomplished this task, and still more willingly does he submit the result to the public, without Vanini's express consent; not however without his final acquiescence ('sine expresso illius consensu non tamen sine concessu'). He ingenuously adds, that his object in obtaining the author's approval when the work was on the point of publication was to prevent its being a literary theft. Vanini gave his sanction to the transaction, as the authors of it hoped he would, and thus approved what he could not recall. The reader is finally bidden to enjoy the good things which he (the publisher), like another Prometheus, has stolen for him.

In the case of a book that has excited so much suspicion as Vanini's *Dialogues* these remarks are invaluable. Not that they relieve the author from the responsibility of a work to which he, tardily, but voluntarily put his name, and which he describes in his dedication to Bassompierre as 'meis philosophicis colloquiis.' But they undoubtedly constitute facts that ought to be taken into the fullest account by any one who attempts to convert the contents of the *Dialogues* into a formidable *Acte d'Accusation*. If Vanini is to be considered liable for the sentiments of the work, there is nothing to show that the liability extends to the actual form in which they are conveyed. Certainly the form differs considerably from that of his former work published only twelve months before. There is in the *Dialogues* an occasional absence of caution and self-restraint, a slightly-marked exhibition of petulance and self-will, a disdain of qualifying, extreme, or one-sided statements, which is altogether different from the tone and manner of the *Amphitheatre*; but which is readily explicable when regarded as esoteric communications to a few chosen disciples, fully cognizant of their master's general line of thought, and therefore able to supply restrictions or correctives when necessary. Few persons are so careful in private communications to trusted friends as in their public utterances; and Vanini was probably no exception to this rule. Regarded from this point of view, and remembering Vanini's undoubtedly free-thinking proclivities, the fewness of the extreme propositions which the industry and malevolence of his foes have been able to accumulate from the *Dialogues* is truly wonderful. We have here, as Cousin himself allows,

Vanini's most secret thoughts; and if these can abide, as I am persuaded they can, the most rigid investigation without convicting their author either of atheism or immorality, we need not be afraid that further examination into his public life and utterances will ever succeed in doing so.

This mention of Cousin in connection with the *Dialogues* leads me to notice the treatment which Vanini has received at the hands of the great French eclectic. This is all the more needful, because his *Fragment* is now the most accessible authority on the subject, and incorporates valuable materials not to be found elsewhere. Cousin's reluctance to do justice to the philosophy of the Renaissance, especially when its representatives are Italians, is well-known.[1] Vanini has the ill-fortune to be both an Italian and a pre-Cartesian thinker. Such an untoward concurrence of adverse circumstances is more than enough to put him outside the pale of Cousin's excessively national sympathies. Accordingly, on the pretence of the most judicial impartiality, he arraigns Vanini's *Dialogues* of offences against religion and against morality, which, if proved, would have gone far to justify the sentence of the Toulouse Parliament against its author; which, nevertheless, Cousin pronounces 'execrable.' I confess, on my first reading of Cousin's paper, prior to an acquaintance with Vanini's works, I was inclined to agree with him, so judiciously is the indictment framed, and the evidence manipulated, while all extenuating circumstances are carefully kept out of sight. But subsequent consideration, combined with an attentive perusal of the *Dialogues*, have convinced me that the few grains of truth in his presentation of Vanini are buried beneath an overwhelming mass of religious and philosophical prejudice. When you come to hear my own estimate of Vanini, you will not, I think, find me blind to undoubted imperfections in his character both as a man and as a philosopher. But Cousin's method of ignoring the origin of the *Dialogues*,—of stringing together a number of extracts from its most advanced passages, many of them forcibly separated from their context, as well as perverted by wanton mistranslation,[2] while not a few express sentiments of disciples which are not only not Vanini's, but are in avowed opposition to his own opinions,—is both uncritical and flagrantly unjust; add to which that he is occasionally guilty of placing implicit

[1] His motive may be stated in his own words: 'Du siècle d'Aristote à celui de Descartes, j'aperçois un vide de deux mille ans.'—*Eloge de Descartes*, Œuv., i. p. 7. Every impartial student of philosophy is aware that the 'void' exists only in his own intensely national imagination. Comp. the 6th Lecture (Philosophie de la Renaissance) in his *Hist. Gen. de la Phil.*, p. 270.

[2] Comp. Fiorentino, *Nuova Antol.*, p. 207.

reliance on the absurd stories[1] which were put in circulation by Vanini's enemies; and which for the most part need no other refutation than what their inherent improbability readily furnishes.

The publication of the *Dialogues* so soon after the *Amphitheatre* is fully explained by the origin of the former work. Cousin is duly impressed by the anomaly of two works emanating from the same author within so short a time exhibiting characteristics not only so different, but so diametrically opposed.[2] Longer reflection and a disposition to deal fairly by a thinker who was unfortunate enough to have lived before the dawn of French philosophy, might have suggested the psychological difficulty, if not impossibility, of a thinker passing within the compass of twelve months from the extreme of orthodoxy to that of impiety and blasphemy. The same moderating influences, if allowed due scope, might also have hinted that it was neither philosophical nor fair to judge a thinker in the early part of the seventeenth, by standards in force in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The implied contrast, to be just, should not have been between Vanini and Cousin, but between Vanini and such men as Cardan, Montaigne, Bruno, Pomponazzi, or any other of the free-thinkers of his own time.

I have said that the *Dialogues* occupy a totally different standpoint from that which pertains to the *Amphitheatre*. While in the latter Vanini is a theologian, in the former he is altogether a student of medicine and a natural philosopher. He endeavours in the *Dialogues* to put aside, or treat as of secondary importance, all questions which pertain to ecclesiastical dogma. His aim is to unravel, so far as he can with the imperfect means, metaphysical and material, at his command, the secrets of Nature. Clearly this difference of standpoint should have been recognized by Cousin. He however not only ignores the fact, but, with a candour which enhances his unfairness, he declares his intention not to consider the author of the *Dialogues* as a physicist.[3] In other words he persists, notwithstanding the

[1] Of these grotesque stories the following may serve as examples in addition to those already mentioned:—

Gramond relates that Vanini was compelled to quit Italy and take refuge in France on account of some crime he had committed.

Gui Patin is the questionable authority for another anecdote whose intrinsic absurdity surpasses all the rest. On one occasion Vanini, when in distressed circumstances, wrote to the Pope, threatening that if he were not given a good benefice he would in three months destroy the whole of the Christian religion.

[2] 'Vanini n'est pas athée dans l'Amphitheatre, nous ne craignons pas de reconnaître qu'il l'est à peu près dans les Dialogues' (*Fragments*, p. 68), on which Professor Fiorentino pertinently asks, 'Che cosa vuol dire essere ateo *press' a poco?*'

[3] 'En effet ce n'est pas le physicien que nous étudions dans Vanini,' p. 48.

obvious purport of the work and the protests of its author, to regard him only as a theologian, and hence to apply to his crude explanations of natural phenomena no other criterion than that of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. In a critic of Vanini's own age, when theology solemnly decreed its dogmas and ideas as the boundaries and laws of all human sciences, such a partial estimate of a philosophical work might have been pardonable; in a critic of our own day the obvious unfairness cannot easily be forgiven.

Vanini divides his *Dialogues* into four parts, or books. The first treats of the firmament and the atmosphere; the second, of water and earth; the third, of the generation of animals; the fourth, of the religion of the Gentiles. You will perceive that, with the exception of the last book, the matters discussed belong entirely to physics, or natural science. Few, indeed, are the subjects on which Vanini's *Dialogues* do not attempt to enlighten their readers. What is the cause of rainbows? How are rivers originated? Is rest the cause of motion, or is motion the cause of rest? What is the nature of demons? These are a small, but fair, sample of the countless enquiries to which Vanini professes to supply an answer. No doubt, in our own day, many of the subjects debated would be considered too frivolous or too obscene for discussion at all; at least, we should now have to refer for them to treatises on physiology, or medical science; but we must bear in mind that in those days these subjects had not yet risen to the rank of separate sciences. Not only did the physicists—such men as Cardan, Telesius, Vives, etc.—explore every department of Nature; but the theologians, both of that and preceding times, had claimed for themselves the right to investigate every branch of human knowledge. In short, among all men of learning, there was then a general persuasion that, to use Bacon's words, 'whatever deserved to exist deserved to be known.' Besides which, doctors in theology frequently graduated in medicine as well; so that a theologian's researches into human physiology, *e.g.* was not a whit more uncommon than the investigations of a physicist—such a man as Sanchez, for instance—into the sacred domain of theology.

Moreover, physical science, in its earlier growth, like the random curiosity of children, refuses to be restrained by any of those considerations of delicacy and modesty which belong to its after-development. The greater part of Cousin's elaborate impeachment of the *Dialogues* is taken up with this point of their supposed immoral tendencies. I can only say that I have carefully gone through the book from beginning to end, and have re-read more than once those portions which he has selected for special reprobation,[1] and, in my

[1] Comp. *Fragments* pp. 62, 63 with the passages referred to in the *Dialogues*.

opinion, the most suspicious passages, even the 'deux tristes passages' to which he refers, are not only compatible with innocence, but they require a distinct prejudice in order to infer guilt. Hence I regard Cousin's conclusions as both arbitrary and unfounded, and his righteous indignation is altogether uncalled-for. Had he only remembered the physicist standpoint of the author, which he took upon himself to ignore, most of his hostile remarks on this point must have been left unwritten. I would engage to point out in Cardan and Montaigne passages of a more directly lascivious character than anything that can be found in Vanini's *Dialogues*; and, in the case of the latter writer, these passages have not the excuse of genuine scientific curiosity, but are merely the morbid extravagances of excessive candour and self-dissection. Of course the inference drawn from these free disquisitions are supposed to receive confirmation from Vanini's ill reputation; but we cannot too often insist on the suspicious origin and unfounded character of these reports. The honourable position which we shall find Vanini held at Toulouse as the personal friend of Le Mazuyer, the First President of the Parliament, and the tutor of his children, seems to me a complete answer to the allegation of his openly profligate conduct during his residence in that city.

Besides its supposed prurient character, Cousin inveighs against the impiety of the *Dialogues*; but when analysed, this charge merely means that the *Dialogues* are skeptical. This is no doubt a fact. On all hands it is admitted that Vanini is a skeptic and a free-thinker —a man whose eager curiosity and passionate love of liberty made almost every kind of restraint intolerable. God and Nature only excepted, Vanini acknowledged himself as subject to no law. As to Christianity, though he admits the obligations imposed on him by the Church, he is a true disciple of Pomponazzi; and whenever dogma presses very hard upon him, he relieves his conscience by avowing what doctrines and opinions he would maintain if *he were not a Christian*. Some persons may call such a profession of faith disingenuous; but we have no right to impugn the sincerity of a *modus credendi* which our former researches have shown to be not only shared by such staunch believers as Augustine, but also to be inevitable to a reception of an authoritative revelation. Cousin himself knew how to make his eclecticism bend to the imperious demands of ecclesiastical dogma; and was assuming Vanini's deference to Christianity to have been insincere. This is a very different indict-

Not only does Cousin in this indictment of Vanini forcibly wrest passages from their context, but he is careful to suppress others in which Vanini asserts his chastity and his temperance in food and drink. Cf. *e.g. Dial.*, pp. 176, 177.

ment from the 'atheism,' 'ribald blasphemy,' and 'open profligacy,' with which he charges him. Besides, some allowance for Vanini's depreciatory estimate of Christianity must be made—as in the similar cases of Bruno, Montaigne, and others—for the false and degrading form in which it was presented to him by the Romish Church.

But though I quite grant that the *Dialogues* are eminently skeptical, I am certain they are more so in their satirical tone and spirit than in their express conclusions. This, I believe, is the reason why their skepticism is generally over-estimated. His commentators seem to find it difficult to believe either that his professions are real or that his disclaimers can be seriously meant. He frequently puts, *e.g.* into the mouth of supposed unbelievers, some of the objections to ecclesiastical dogma which were then current enough among the free-thinkers of France and Italy. In a book like the *Dialogues* containing general queries, "*de omne scibile*," such questions could hardly be deemed out of place, but it is rashly assumed, by Cousin and others, that in all such cases the real objector is Vanini himself, and that the weakness of his replies is intentional, and betrays the true direction of his sympathies. This, I confess, appears to me an utterly gratuitous and malevolent supposition. Sometimes, no doubt, his reply to an objector may seem to us glaringly weak because we stand on the vantage ground of three centuries' further progress in religious and natural enquiries,[1] but it may have been the strongest which Vanini could supply. In other cases we have, in his answers to objections, examples of vigorous and cogent argumentation which a controversialist of our own day could hardly hope to surpass.[2] On the whole, Vanini's *Dialogues* leave on my mind the impression of a restless eager searcher after truth. With this sacred object in view, he explores in every conceivable direction, improbable as well as probable. Having exhausted the resources of theology, and fathomed the shallows of scholastic logic, he, like so many ardent spirits of his time, plunges somewhat wildly and blindly, yet with unquestionable earnestness, into the unbounded domain of Nature. Here his great teachers are Aristotle and Pomponazzi, and the problems on which the Stagirite exercised his intellect are also those on which Vanini

[1] The same thought occurred to Cousin in reference to the *Amphitheatre*; but, this notwithstanding, he insists, in his impeachment of the *Dialogues*, on Vanini's deliberate and wanton sacrifice of the strength of orthodox reasoning in behalf of atheistic and materialistic objectors. Cf. *Frag.*, pp. 33 and 53.

[2] Cf. *e.g.* the argument on the non-fulfilment of St. Paul's prophecy of the speedy arrival of Antichrist, p. 357. Professor Fiorentino allows that Vanini displays all his powers of sarcasm in refuting some of these objections. Cf. *Telesio*, p. 216.

expended his powers. He attempts to emulate even the comprehensive survey of his master. The contents of the Aristotelian works on natural philosophy, Vanini, to judge from the evidence of his disciples, would fain have compressed into the dimensions of a few short dialogues; just as a work on some modern science is concentrated into a 'Primer' or 'Catechism.' Even some of the most characteristic peculiarities and defects of the *Dialogues* appear to me traceable to this rivalry of Aristotle. Its third book, *e.g.* which so excites Cousin's indignation, is nothing else than a collection of crude speculations on the model of Aristotle's treatises on the same subject. The readiness with which every problem is attacked, and the superficial and frivolous solutions frequently offered, remind us strongly of the *Problemata.* No doubt Vanini's vanity, fed by the flattery of disciples, was quite equal to the delusion that his emulation was really successful, and that he was a worthy compeer of his illustrious master.[1] Yet even here I should be inclined to make allowance for him, by taking into consideration his intellectual surroundings, and the knowledge of his time. Humility is not, under all circumstances, an easily acquired virtue; nor is it necessarily conducive to veracity. It is difficult to persuade even a one-eyed man that he is in no respect better endowed than any individual of the blind community among which he may dwell; and the self-denial which could prompt or maintain such a delusion would only be obtained at the cost of truth.

No accusation against the *Dialogues* is more common than that which charges them with being wanting in definite purpose, in reality and earnestness; so far as this is not a necessary accompaniment of the irony and sarcasm which characterize the book, and of the restlessness and impetuosity of its author, I should ascribe it to his youth. When Vanini took part in these dialogues he could not have been more than twenty years of age. His short and stormy life had been a kind of forced march through many fields of speculation and varied experiences of existence. The new wine of his knowledge had not yet ceased fermenting, and the *Dialogues* might be described as a skimming of the froth. He was a philosopher *in the making.* It would be strange if the work of such a man should not be occasion-

[1] Cf. *Dial.*, p. 26. 'Sed quid blatero,' says Vanini, 'cum meis istis argutiolis quando Philosophorum Magister scitissimè id pertractavit;' to which Alexander:—'O Utinam Magistrum Aristotelem non excepisses, quia non dubito quin fortiorem sapientiæ arcem exædificasses.' To this rather gross flattery Vanini answers—'Ha! ha! ha!' If the dialogue were spoken, it would be necessary to hear the concluding outburst of laughter, in order to determine whether it was derisive or acquiescent. The publisher of the *Dialogues* also calls Vanini 'Aristoteles redivivus.'

ally marred by indications of haste and immaturity. But below the fermenting surface there was, I feel convinced, a considerable depth of profound philosophic earnestness. The independence of character which made him regardless of popular opinion was not a symptom of vanity, or desire for novelty; but was the vigorous self-assertion of his own intellectual manhood. The calmness with which he met his terrible fate sufficiently proves that he was not destitute of the more solid qualities of our human nature. In this respect his death may be regarded as fortunate for his fame. Had his written works been our sole means of judging him, we should not, perhaps, have awarded him, at least to the extent which we are now justified in doing, the merit of seriousness and earnestness of character, which is clearly his due.

Cousin deems the final conclusion of the *Dialogues* to be pure Epicuræanism. In support of this theory he quotes a few utterances of Alexander—Vanini's supposed disciple—one of them being the verses from Tasso's *Aminta* :—

'Perdutto è tutto il tempo
Che in amar non si spende.'

These expressions his critic makes the basis of Vanini's theory, and of his conception of the end of human life. While we point out the gross unfairness of thus attributing to the master the unsupported conclusion of his disciple, we may again admit, as we have already, that Vanini is strongly marked by the enthusiasm of Nature which was so prominent a feature of the free-thought of his time as well as the characteristic of his closest friends. Like Bruno, Vanini is almost a Nature-worshipper. We can even trace some development in this feeling in passing from the *Amphitheatre* to the *Dialogues*. In the former, Nature is the 'Power of God,' in the latter she is assigned a distinct, though not quite independent, personality of her own.[1] Throughout the *Dialogues*, too, there is a decided tendency to substitute natural for supernatural causes, wherever the former appear adequate to the effects assigned them. Not that you are to suppose that Vanini is much in advance of his age in his conception of natural causes. They are all of the *a priori* metaphysical order, direct inferences from imaginary properties or ideal perfections, appeals to the *ipse dixits* of a variety of authors from Aristotle to Cardan, the word of the Stagirite being however generally distinguished from all other opinions by its superior authority. But to give you an idea of Vanini's science, which you may compare with

[1] He thus begins *e.g.* his Dialogue on Monstrous Births, 'Cur Natura, quæ Dei facultas imo Deus ipse cum sit, perfectissime emoliri cuncta deberet,' etc.—*Dial.*, p. 251.

what we have learnt of the methods of Agrippa and Bruno, I have culled a few passages of the *Dialogues* at random.—Alexander *e.g.* entreats his master, by the genius of Pomponazzi, to give him his opinion on the cause of the heaven's motion. To which Julius Cæsar answers: 'If I had not been brought up in the schools of Christians, I should have said that the heaven is a living being, because it is moved by its own form, which is living. Certainly Aristotle called the movement of the heaven a living motion; asserting that it is an animal which is moved by an eternal motor. Some refuse, from Aristotle's words, to recognize a rational soul in this celestial animal, because Aristotle thus defined it—The act of an organic body, the potentiality of what possesses life. But this definition is suitable to the celestial animal, so is, therefore, the thing defined.'

'*Alexander.* But what do you think?

Julius Cæsar. There is matter in the heavens.

Alexander. So I think.

Julius Cæsar. And therefore form.

Alexander. That I also grant.

Julius Cæsar. This form is not brutal (*i.e.* devoid of life) it inheres in elements of a certain kind.

Alexander. That I do not deny.

Julius Cæsar. Neither is this form Intelligence, for that by no means pertains to matter. Therefore it is life or soul, and hence produces motion. Intelligence, therefore, does not cause the motion of the heavens, unless we affirm absurdly that it has two movers.'

Alexander objects that religion prevents certain persons from ascribing a soul to the heavens; and asks what free opinion on the subject they should hold (quid liberi profiteri possumus), on which—

'*Julius Cæsar.* This, unless I am mistaken, that the map of the heavens is moved in a circle by its own form, just as are certain elements.

Alexander. But how are the heavens moved by certain fixed laws, if these Divine motion-causing minds are not first partakers of wisdom (Intelligence)?'

Julius Cæsar. '"Where is the wonder? Is there not a fixed and certain motion in those trumpery little clocks put together by a drunken German?"' To which he adds as examples of unconscious, unintelligent[1] movement, in nature, the regularity of tertian and quartan fever, the punctuality of tides, etc., etc.

[1] By this is meant these motor Intelligences which the physicists of the sixteenth century so liberally distributed among the heavenly bodies, and which they held to be the sole cause of their motion. Vanini's theory of the heavens being moved by its *form* is only an assertion of the inherency of its

But let us turn to another illustration of Vanini's method. On this occasion the scene is a garden in which our Peripatetics are walking to and fro after the manner of their original ancestors in the Lyceum. Alexander opens the conversation 'on Plants.'[1] 'How very refreshing is the strong perfume of roses we have here; but I wonder why wild plants should be more odoriferous than garden and domestic plants, although of the same kind?'

'*Julius Cæsar.* It is so because they extract less moisture from thinner soil.

Alexander. Why then does the cultivated rose smell better?

Julius Cæsar. Because it requires a more kindly nurture.

Alexander. I have always held an opposite opinion.

Julius Cæsar. Why?

Alexander. Because I have heard of many, that if garlic is sown close to rose-trees they smell the sweeter.

Julius Cæsar. So indeed it is, not because they imbibe their nutriment, but because the pungency and heat of the garlic being infused into the roses, stirs up and draws forth their vigour.

Alexander. Very fairly accounted for. But why do these roses, when they have long endured the heat of the day, lose their redness?

Julius Cæsar. Because their native heat being aided by that of the heaven, naturally extracts colour up to a certain point, to which without that aid it could not attain. That process being finished, the foreign heat, when the moisture is dried up, will exterminate these fine particles in which heat resides, just as we see in the case of wax; its colour is lost by being exposed to the sun, when the sun is extracted from it: and those parts expire, by the tenuity of which colour is produced.

Alexander. But why is the rind of the rose-tree thorny?

Julius Cæsar. Either because there is a certain rarity in the way the sap ascends, which is increased by the action of the sun, or else the rose being odoriferous, its plant is earthy and dry, for perfume comes from a thin soil. That earthy dryness being different throughout the whole plant would soon cause it to dry up. It must therefore be expelled, and as it appears inconvenient to Nature that

motive-power, and may be compared with the 'Spiritus mundi,' which is a modification of the same opinion. What he is here contending against, is an extra-mundane government of the universe, and what he insists upon is the immanence of Nature-forces. His argument therefore approximates not to Atheism, but to Pantheism, though Cousin adduces it as a link in his proof of Vanini's Atheism. *Frag.* p. 59. Vanini's express statement after his master Aristotle, that the *Form* of matter is its 'life or soul, and on that account produces motion,' is a sufficient answer to Cousin's inference.

[1] *Dial.*, p. 151.

it should be taken up by the leaves because they so soon drop off, it therefore bursts forth through the rind, which the future humour could not penetrate unless by sharp points, in the form of thorns.'—An amusing instance of the way in which real qualities and existences were inferred by the physicists of that time from verbal implications.

As Vanini was put to death for the supposed crime of Atheism, I have thought it as well to make a few extracts from the first chapter of his Fourth Book entitled, 'Of God.'[1] Alexander begins by suggesting that as they have discussed and cleared up so many points relating to man, they should proceed to treat of the end of man, that is God.

'*Julius Cæsar.* Philosophers deny that God is the end of man. God does not exist, say they, on man's account, for on this theory man would be more noble than God. But God is an end to Himself, as they say, but not very acutely. For God is neither a beginning nor end to Himself, because in Him there is neither part, nor motion, nor mean, nor extreme, nor ingress, nor egress, nor anything else except this: Himself. God is simple, there is therefore no distinction in Him; hence, there can be no comparison of causes. Nor on the other hand does man exist on account of God, because God needs nothing.

Alexander. If God did not create man on His own account, because that highest Being and eternal One needed no one, He must have created him on man's account, man is therefore the end of God.

Julius Cæsar. Since every agent is set in motion by its end, man not yet existing could not move God to His creation.

Alexander. Was man then formed for no object at all?

Julius Cæsar. I do not say with the Epicuræans that man was made by chance, but I agree with theologians that he was made by God that He might bestow upon him eternal felicity.[2]

Alexander. Man is beset by so many and so great miseries that if it were not repugnant to the Christian religion . . . I would dare to say that if there are devils, they expiate their guilt in the bodies of men. But when I peruse the Divine utterances, I recognise God's innumerable benefits to man, and with a certain hope I strain forward to eternity.[3]

[1] *Dial.*, p. 352.

[2] The only sermon of which we have any record as having been preached by Vanini was on this subject of the end or final cause of man, which he maintained to be the creation of a connecting link between the lower world of brutes and the higher world of spirits. Cf. *Dial.*, p. 223. The various speculations current at the Renaissance on this tentative commencement of Anthropology may be seen in Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, ii. pp. 71, 72. (Germ. Ed.)

[3] 'Certaque spe ad æternitatem anhelo.'

Julius Cæsar. The desire of perpetuity is inherent in all living beings, as is shown by their longing for children and for fame; but the love of eternity itself attracts very few, hence scarcely any man, no matter how miserable, ever wishes to die—a proof of absence of faith, whence we may infer according to the promise of our Saviour, that the world is drawing near its end, and the day of judgment is approaching. "Nevertheless," he says, "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth." . . .'

A few pages later on, Julius recounts the various hypotheses of the Greek philosophers on the subject of God, on which—

'*Alexander.* These are fables, and I wonder why men so learned should have thought so ignorantly concerning God. For all their divinities being finite, they deny the existence of the supreme independent source of all things, which is called God. But what did the divine Plato think?

Julius Cæsar. He is not afraid to say that the world is God.

Alexander. Why did a man so divine fall into such a mistake?

Julius Cæsar. Because he acknowledged nothing perfect, except God; and believing the world to be most perfect, he was forced to identify it with God.'

My last extract from the *Dialogues* refers to the cause and cure of nightmare.[1]

Alexander asks, Why, when asleep, are we pressed down by a heavy weight upon us, and our voice intercepted? Perhaps we are beset by a dumb devil?

'*Julius Cæsar.* The cause is the thick phlegm or melancholia inhering, not in the brain, but around the stomach (præcordia), whence, becoming turgid with intoxication and indigestion, it presses on the diaphragm and the lungs. A thick vapour also, being breathed forth, ascends into the mouth and the brain, so that the voice is suppressed.

Alexander. I will tell you a wonderful thing. The night before last I found, by the aid of the lamp which, according to our very pleasant custom was burning, my wife, who was sleeping by my side, greatly disturbed in her dreams. Alarmed at this discovery, I called out with a loud voice the venerable name of Jesus. Whereupon she awoke, and said she had been oppressed by a spirit Incubus, who hearing the name of Jesus immediately fled.

Julius Cæsar. No wonder, for at the name of Jesus every knee is bowed, even of infernal beings. Still no decree of the Church of Rome forbids my saying this, if you had shouted out Satan, or any other name, she would have been freed from her oppression. Murky

[1] *Dial.*, pp. 487–488.

and thick spirits weighed upon heart and brain. Whence I suspect this must have happened in the first watch of the night.

Alexander. It was so; but proceed.

Julius Cæsar. It was not on account of the power of the name, however omnipotent that might be, but the sound of the voice restored her to herself; the fumes being dispersed by the voice striking upon the air.'

These extracts will give you some idea of the subjects and method of Vanini's *Dialogues*; and the inarticulate, half-expressed conflict between the claims of ecclesiastical dogma and philosophical tradition on the one hand, and the suggestions of Naturalism and experience on the other, which is one of its most remarkable features. In these secret conferences with chosen friends, Vanini is self-depicted as a Prometheus, not 'bound,' but half bound; one who has partly succeeded in breaking the fetters of ancient prejudice and superstition, and is striving somewhat blindly to make his freedom complete. For the time being his gaze is directed on Nature, whom in his fervent passion he is half inclined to deify as the Queen of the Universe. At least he is convinced that on her sacred virgin territory, rather than in the wordy tomes of schoolmen and philosophers, he must pursue his search for, and if possible discovery of truth—the sole ruling principle of his intellect—the one dominant passion of his whole being.[1]

Nor was it only on his own account that Vanini treasured this liberating influence of Nature. Her cultus was the only instrument of freedom for thinking men that could be opposed to the degrading superstitions of the time. He shared with Bruno the Lucretian conviction, that the Divine mission of Nature was to emancipate men

[1] Cousin concludes Vanini's Epicuræanism not only directly from his express utterances as he interprets them, but indirectly from the supposed fact that his life contains no determining principle of virtue or goodness:—'Avec une pareille philosophie (*i.e.* Epicuræanism) en verité qu'avons-nous à chercher en cette vie, suivre les plaisirs des sens? Et en effet, telle est l'unique fin, l'unique régle, l'unique ressort que Vanini donne à toutes nos actions. Pas un mot sur la liberté, pas un mot sur la vertu désintéressée, pas un mot sur le bonheur d'une conscience honnête.' (*Frag.* p. 61.) Surely never was declamation more unjustifiable. Vanini had little need of oral preaching of liberty, when almost every action of his life was a deliberate offering at her shrine. Allowing that he did not place stress upon disinterested virtue, it was in deference to the orthodox belief in future rewards and punishments. As to the happiness of a good conscience, his whole life was spent in the philosopher's highest duty of search for truth, and his death was endured in the same cause—of which, by the way, Cousin makes no mention. No thoughtful man who could meet a martyr's death so fearlessly, and even joyfully, as Vanini, could be said to be without the happiness of a good conscience.

from the thraldom of sacerdotalism and religious tyranny. His *Dialogues* were an attempt to inculcate this truth. Their object and signification might have been expressed in the lines:—

> 'Hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest
> Non radii soli neque lucida tela dici
> Discutiant, *sed naturæ species ratioque.*'

And if this Nature-enthusiasm on the part of Bruno and Vanini was consciously limited by ecclesiastical dogma (whereas Lucretius was free from all religious preconceptions), they derived this advantage from the limitation, that it provided an incidental reason for an appeal to Nature; because in theory, though not so much in practice, Nature had never quite ceased to be regarded by the Church as a kind of inferior and subsidiary revelation.

But notwithstanding his reverence for Nature, both as an instrument of freedom and as an object of intellection and fervid passion, the final outcome of the *Dialogues* is not, as Cousin asserts, Epicuræan sensualism, but a plaintive skepticism. His long search for truth, his explorations into human knowledge and natural science, so far as he has been able to carry them, end with the verdict of the preacher, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' The close of his last chapter seems to me written in a tone of profound melancholy, almost as if the murky shadow of his approaching fate had already begun to darken his young life. Moved by his desponding utterances, his disciple tries to encourage him. He points out that he is only thirty years old, and has already produced many excellent monuments of learning. Vanini asks, 'What profit these are to him?' 'At all events,' says the disciple, 'the opinions of the wise concerning your learning may tickle your ears.' Vanini replies, that a theologian at Rome of the same name has claimed and received just as much praise for his works, though he has done nothing for it, as he himself wearied out by study. Alexander suggests, that he should have added to his name on the title of his books his mother's family name. 'What do I care about names,' is Vanini's impatient rejoinder. 'A good name is better than riches,' quotes the disciple. As a comment on these words, Vanini suggests Tasso's eloquent description of Human Fame, and its worthless and transitory nature.[1] Alexander then

[1] Nome, e senza soggetto Idoli sono,
Ciò che pregio e valere il mondo appella
La fama, ch' invaghisce à un duolce suono,
Voi superbi mortali, e par sì bella
È un eccho, un sogno, anzi del sogno un' ombra
Ch' ad ogni vento sè dilegua è sgombra.

Dial., p. 493. These verses, which Vanini, contrary to his usual custom,

pertinently asks, 'Why Vanini, despising fame as he did, put his name to his books?' 'In order to obey the Council of Trent,' is the perhaps sarcastic reply. The disciple seems loath to believe that a career like Vanini's is really destitute of happiness; so he suggests, 'Surely you must have found the most abundant pleasures in investigating the secrets of Nature.' Whereupon Vanini relates his experience:—'I am myself exhausted, and worn out by study—indeed, in this human darkness no one can possibly attain a perfect knowledge of things:[1] When I find that even Aristotle, the god of philosophers, has in almost numberless places been mistaken, and when I discover that the science of medicine, the most certain of all, is nevertheless uncertain and deceptive, I would fain subscribe to Agrippa's treatise on "the Vanity of all Human Sciences."' Alexander still tries to console the desponding philosopher by the vision of posthumous fame; but his master refuses the consolation. Under no circumstances can such fame be beneficial or desirable. Were his soul to perish, as Atheists pretend, with the body, what would such renown be worth? On the Christian hypothesis of a future existence, which he freely believes and looks forward to, whatever the fate of his soul, whether heaven, purgatory, or hell, posthumous fame would be either unnecessary or useless. Alexander finally suggests that, under the circumstances, Epicuræanism may be the only life worth leading. But Vanini makes no answer, and waives the subject. In a few more sentences the *Dialogues* end.

Such are the contents of the *Dialogues*; such the spirit, half of freedom and Naturalism, half of Skepticism and despair, of its unfortunate author. Its science, setting aside its true tendency, is of course of a rudimentary character. Compared with the methods of later times, we might almost call it 'Ignorance tempered by superstition.' The same reproach, however, may be made to every physical inquirer of his time. But although Vanini's philosophy, like Agrippa's, is 'occult,' we must not suppose that he was quite led away by his

quotes without a reference, are from the *Gerusalemme*, Book xiv. stanza lxiii. It may be worth noting that Tasso seems to have been a favourite poet of Vanini; he frequently quotes him, and in this place he terms him, 'sui sæculi phœnix.' The fact is not absolutely without importance in its bearing on Vanini's supposed Atheism. It is remarkable that he should have chosen 'The Poet of the Cross,' when he might easily have confined himself to writers of a free-thinking and skeptical kind, as *e.g.* his friend Marino.

[1] Cf. *Dial.*, p. 2, where speaking of himself in the third person, he says, 'sibique ipsi conscius est, ea quæ scimus esse minimam partem eorum quæ ignoramus;' so, also, in a preceding page (150) he sums up the limits of human knowledge in words of perennial significance:—

"Effectum rei conspicimus, causam vero ignoramus."

far-fetched explanations of natural phenomena. He fully recognised the truth which forms the chief outcome of Agrippa's 'Vanity of all Human Knowledge,' and which the most recent advance of modern science cannot transcend, that 'we can only know the effect, never the cause.' This was a truth insisted on so frequently by Vanini, in connexion with Agrippa's book, as to produce some degree of impatience in his disciples, who were clearly more credulous than himself.[1] His own researches into the knowledge of his time produced on his mind the same result as his work on Occult Science did on Agrippa—it was a stage in his skeptical career.

But, notwithstanding all imperfections, the science of Vanini, with that of Agrippa, Bruno, and other free-thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was a decided advance on prior modes of thought. It was something to have had men's attention directed to Nature; even though they brought to her investigation methods and preconceptions derived from theology and *a priori* reasoning. The achievement was that of a new starting-point and a new goal; and although the steps of the first discoverers were somewhat halting and uncertain, they and their successors never afterwards quite forgot either the route or its due termination. Nor was the tentative nature of the steps with which the leaders of this movement essayed new paths altogether a disadvantage. It induced a disinclination to dogmatizing on the part of the teacher and, as a consequence, gave more freedom to the speculations and experiments of the disciple. In Vanini's *Dialogues*, *e.g.*, Alexander does not scruple to contradict his revered master whenever he thinks fit; and not unfrequently he even succeeds in converting him to his own view. The standpoint of Vanini, as that of an erudite teacher, was necessarily modified when observations of natural phenomena, not to be found in the pages of Aristotle, Galen, Hippokrates, or Cardan, but perhaps in the next garden or field, were the objects of discussion. Alexander or any other disciple might claim some credit for the use of his senses, the accuracy of his observation, or the correctness of his report as to his own experience, or of popular opinion on the point at issue. Vanini was, with all his vanity, as far from arrogating any superiority as a teacher, as he was from attributing infallibility to his own masters. He has no scruple in contradicting Pomponazzi, nor even the great Stagirite himself,[2] when his dictum seemed opposed to reason and

[1] Comp. *Dial.*, p. 150, when after much debate on the Inclination of the Magnetic Needle, Vanini concludes: 'Effectum rei conspicimus, causam vero ignoramus,' to which Alexander replies: 'Sat scio, et Agrippæ libellum de scientiarum vanitate non improbo, sed rogo ti mi Juli pomarium ingrediamur,' etc. Comp. also the commendation of Agrippa's skepticism, p. 478.

[2] Comp. *e.g.* pp. 221, 222, 437 of the *Dialogues*.

experience—his ultimate criteria of all truth outside the margin of ecclesiastical dogma.[1]

A noteworthy feature of the *Dialogues*, which is found also in the *Amphitheatre*, is the extent of Vanini's reading. He quotes the most eminent names in the Latin Classics as well as in Greek Philosophy. His knowledge of the schoolmen also was not inconsiderable, though he professes the greatest disdain of their method. While the physicists of that and the preceding century—Cardan, Fracaster, Agrippa—are frequently referred to, not always with approval, Vanini's instinctive independence and free-thought occasionally assume a bolder form than we might expect from his surroundings. He refuses, *e.g.* to believe in the existence of demoniacs, except when proved by natural reason; and is inclined to think that supposed cases, when well attested, may be explained by physical disease.[2] He is fully convinced of the stupendous effects of imagination in producing phenomena of a semi or wholly miraculous nature. To this he ascribes, what he does not dispute, cases of the evil cured by the royal touch, and ignorant quacks succeeding where medical men have failed.[3] The ancient oracles he considers as the impositions of priests; and the auguries are no less vain and unfounded. He seems to make, as we saw in the *Amphitheatre*, some exception as to astrological influence, though not to the extent of thwarting a man's own volition. He accounts for stories of a resurrection from the dead by the phenomena presented by such diseases as epilepsy; but makes a special exception of instances narrated in the Bible and ecclesiastical history. No doubt his explanations of physical phenomena are generally far-fetched and unfounded, but occasionally his guesses come pretty nearly to what we now consider truths. His theory of the fall of the dew,[4] *e.g.* is a fair approximation to the best accredited mode of explaining it in the present day. He has been accused of propagating the Darwinian hypothesis that men are descended from apes,[5] but the accusation, like

[1] Comp. *Dial.*, p. 240. Of a certain matter under discussion Alexander asks, 'Quomodo id probas?' to which Vanini replies, 'Ratione, experimento, et Aristotelis testimonio.' But the disciple is no less exigeant of complete demonstration than the master, for a few lines further on Alexander says, 'Rationem hanc nisi exemplis et experimento confirmes, non admittans.'

[2] Comp. *Dial.*, pp. 453, 472, 480. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 433–437, 473.

[4] *Dial.*, p. 218.

[5] Cf. Cesare Cantu, *Gli eretici d'Italia*, iii. 729, referring to p. 233 of the *Dialogues*, where Vanini says, 'Alii somniarunt ex Simiarum, porcorum, et ranarum putredine genitum primum hominem, iis enim est in carne moribusque persimilis. Quidam vero mitiores Athæi, solos Æthiopes ex simiarum genere et semine prodiisse attestantur quia et color idem in utrisque conspicitur.' Alexander replies, 'Miror profecto cur ex ipsa hominis rectitudine non agnos-

so many others against him, is wrongly made. He mentions the belief as held by advanced thinkers, but he expressly and even vehemently repudiates it. The Dialogues contain here and there remarks of a striking character. Vanini tells us, *e.g.*, that miracles mark the youth and old age of a religion, *not its mature vigour*; he is also inclined, in harmony with recent thought on the same subject, to consider evil as the result, not of supernatural and spiritual, but of physical causes.[1] I cannot leave the *Dialogues* without noticing a pleasing characteristic which pertains to the disciple as well as to the master: I mean the genuine love of natural sights, sounds and scenery. The Naturalism is not only that of the study, of laboured erudition and reflection, but the pure, spontaneous enjoyment of Nature for her own sake. Master and disciple walk forth in the crisp freshness of a summer morning; and the latter likens the exposition of Plato, for which he importunes his teacher, to the music of the birds singing around them. They walk in the garden, as we have noticed, and take their subjects of discussion from the perfume and spines of the rose tree. When wearied with discussion, they recreate mind and body together by walking amid the fruit trees in the orchard. If the *Dialogues* were, as seems not improbable, spoken and written during Vanini's residence in Genoa, we may imagine himself and Alexander promenading through the groves and gardens so delightfully placed on the high ground behind the town, overlooking its terraced streets: while at the bottom of the declivity, and as far beyond as the eye could reach, rolled the blue waves of the Mediterranean.

On their first publication, the *Dialogues* received, as we have seen, the approbation of the Sorbonne. The imprimatur of two of its Doctors occupies the first page after the title. These theological censors announce that, having examined and read the *Dialogues*, they found nothing repugnant or contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome; on the other hand, they deemed the *Dialogues* to be most subtle and most deserving of publication. It is hardly probable that this permission was ever actually rescinded, notwithstanding the tradition that it was subjected to a fresh examination by the Sorbonne and ordered to be burnt. This is alleged to be the reason of Vanini's sudden removal from Paris, probably during the early part of 1617. At the same time we must bear in mind that

cant præ excellentiorem in homine quam in brutis originem. . . . *J. C.* Imo primævos homines curvos quemadmodum quadrupedes ambulasse Athæi vociferantur, nam et consenescunt fieri ut veluti quadrupedes incedant.' The last idea was probably derived from the old Greek enigma propounded by the Sphinx to Œdipus.

[1] *Dial.*, p. 339.

the account of the reason of Vanini's removal from Paris comes to us from his enemies, and must be received with the utmost caution. No historical record has as yet appeared to prove that the Sorbonne took further action concerning the book.[1] A more simple and obvious method of accounting for Vanini's departure may, I think, be found in the movements of his patron, Bassompierre. We know that the Marshal was actively employed in 1617 in the civil wars which then raged, and in the month of March in that year took part in the siege of Château-Porcieu, where he was chief of the artillery.[2] It is not unreasonable to suppose that this campaign may have led to the breaking up, at least temporarily, of his Paris establishment, and the dismissal of Vanini; or else, as Niceron suggests,[3] he may have tired of a position of dependence, and preferred his customary free and vagrant existence. However this may be, the fact is certain that, for some reason or other, Vanini quitted Paris, and took his ill-omened journey to Toulouse. In the complete dearth of materials for his biography we have no clue to the motive which induced him to choose Toulouse as a dwelling-place. The common story, that he was flying from the Sorbonne, would make the selection still more inexplicable. Certainly a more questionable 'city of refuge' for the hunted fugitive of religious bigotry it would have been impossible to discover. Its parliament, though a lay body, was more severe in its treatment of supposed heretics than even the Holy Office itself,[4] and its blood-stained annals are to this day among the most remarkable records of

[1] The sole authority for the statement is Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, who does not however vouchsafe us the source whence he drew his information. He not only tells us that the Sorbonne re-examined the book and condemned it to the flames; but that Vanini was further accused of having written the fabulous work *De Tribus Impostoribus*. Cousin says of the action of the Sorbonne, that 'its tardy condemnation of the *Dialogues* is a supposition. Its approbation is certain'—*Fragments*, p. 49, note. A further incidental proof of the falsity of Rosset's statement seems furnished by the date of the insertion of the *Dialogues* on the *Index*. The book was not prohibited until 1623. Had it been condemned by the Sorbonne in 1617, it would in all probability have found its way to the *Index* much earlier.

[2] Moreri, *Dict.* Art. 'Bassompierre,' cf. *Memoirs*, ed. De Chanterac, ii. p. 114. From his *Memoirs* it would appear that Bassompierre was in Paris in attendance on the court from May or June, 1617, up to March, 1617.

[3] *Memoirs*, xxvi. p. 376.

[4] Gramond makes this severity a ground of eulogy: 'Non alibi in Hæreses armantur severius leges, et quanquam Calvinistis fides publica *Edicto Naunetico* bedetur, qua mutuo nectimur habendis simul commerciis et unà administrandis rebus, nunquam se *Tolosæ* credidere Sectarii quo fit ut una inter Galliæ urbes Tolosa immunis sit Hæretica labe, nemine in civem admisso cujus suspecta Sedi Apostolicæ fides.'—Gramond, *Hist. Galliæ*, lib. iii.

religious fanaticism. A suspected heretic, like Vanini, whose book had been condemned by the Sorbonne, would have had a warm reception at the hands of the pious Tolosans. We find, however, that on his arrival, so far from exciting the suspicions of the citizens, he soon filled an honourable position in the city as a personal friend of Le Mazuyer, the First President of the Parliament, and as a tutor to his children. It is difficult to suppose that a mere vagrant philosopher could have achieved such a position, unless he had brought with him letters of recommendation from Paris. Perhaps Bassompierre, when dismissing his almoner, procured for him this post. At any rate, his occupancy of it may be accepted as additional disproof of Rosset's story of the condemnation of the Sorbonne, and the hasty flight from Paris.

At Toulouse, Vanini seems to have enjoyed an undisturbed existence for some two years. Besides his constant employment at the house of Le Mazuyer, we are told that he taught, and probably practised, medicine.[1] The report that he used to lecture on forbidden subjects at ten o'clock at night, is a self-evident calumny; perhaps originating in familiar conversations on philosophical subjects, which we may suppose he was wont to hold with confidential friends. We need no evidence to convince us that the Sokrates of the *Dialogues* was fond of *viva voce* discussion; and we can even believe that occasionally his utterances might appear somewhat strange to the benighted Tolosans. But there is nothing in Vanini's works or character to show that he was destitute of common sense and self-respect. He clearly was not that compound of lunatic and open profligate which is portrayed in the absurd caricature sketches of his enemies. Vanini's quiet life at Toulouse was not destined to last long. Towards the end of 1618 the storm began to gather about his path, which in the following year finally overwhelmed him in its mad fury.

Cousin has endeavoured, though unhappily in a far different spirit, to effect for Vanini's trial and execution, the service which Professor Berti has accomplished for Giordano Bruno, *i.e.* to discover some authentic record of the proceedings before the Toulouse Parliament. Unfortunately, with very meagre success. One or two documents of some importance have been found, but for a full and impartial narrative of the interrogatories administered to him, and his answers to them, we have yet to wait. Failing satisfactory evidence of his trial, Cousin has recourse to two contemporary writers, each of whom was no doubt in a position to give a perfectly correct account of the proceedings against Vanini, if he were not utterly incapacitated by bitter religious animosity. As it is, every word they utter must be

[1] Cousin, pp. 72-84.

received with caution. Cousin's admission of their evidence can only be accounted for by his largely sharing their prejudice. Having determined, from the *Dialogues*, that Vanini was an Atheist, a hypocrite and a voluptuary, he is naturally desirous that his judgment should be confirmed by contemporary writers; though even he is compelled to admit and guard against their obvious bias.

The first of these writers is Gramond, formerly a President of the Toulouse Parliament, and author of a *History of France from the Death of Henry IV.*[1] He tells us that while most people regarded Vanini as a heresiarch, he looked upon him as an Atheist; a naïve admission that his judgment of the matter was both singular and extreme. He, however, gives us some details as to the charges against Vanini, which, allowing for his prepossessions, we may accept as indicating the character of the indictment preferred against him. 'He pretended,' says Gramond, 'to teach medicine; in reality he was a misleader of youth. He made a mockery of sacred things. He blasphemed the incarnation of Christ.[2] He did not acknowledge the existence of a God. He attributed everything to chance. He worshipped Nature, as the excellent mother and source of all beings. This was the chief of all his errors, and he had the audacity to teach it in Toulouse—that holy city; and as novelties always have an attraction, especially for the young, he soon collected about him a great number of disciples,' etc.[3] With the *Dialogues* before us, we can readily understand how the naturalistic sympathies and free

[1] *Historiarum Galliæ ab excessu Henrici IV. Libri decem octo.* Gramond intended this work as a supplement to De Thou's celebrated history, to which it is inferior in every respect. It is best known by its abject and unworthy flattery of Cardinal Richelieu. The bigotry of Gramond is especially shown by another history:—*Historia Prostratæ a Ludovico xiii. sectariorum in Gallia Rebellionis.* Toulouse, 1623.—In this book the Protestants generally are treated with even more indignity than Vanini in the former work, and the worst cruelties perpetrated against them are in attempt fully justified!! It is however only fair to state that Gramond had, so far as appears, no part in the trial and sentence of Vanini, for it was not himself, as some have thought, but his father that was President of the Court of Requests or Enquiries in 1619. Nor is the name of Gramond to be found in the list of the Criminal Committee of the Parliament which finally passed sentence on Vanini. Cousin, *Frag.*, p. 88. Cf. Ersch und Grueber, Art. 'Gramond.'

[2] The nature of this blasphemy, and its similarity to modern interpretations of the same doctrine, not generally reputed blasphemous, is worth a passing notice:—'Est autem,' says Vanini, 'Dei filius à Deo genitus, intelligens enim seipsum Deus generat ex sese sibi æqualem filium propteræa quod intellectio æqualis est intelligenti, ergo etiam res intellecta.' The whole passage is worth referring to. *Dial.*, p. 365.

[3] Gramond, *Hist. Galliæ ab excessu Henry IV.* Lib. iii. Cf. Durandus, *Vie de Vanini*, p. 183, note. Cousin, *Fragments*, p. 72.

speculations of its author should have been perverted by the ignorant zeal of the historian into the extreme opinions which he thus charges against him. The suspicion with which religious dogma in all ages regards language which it is unable to comprehend, or which is not a literal echo of its own chosen terminology, and the latitude of construction which it indulges on such occasions, are well known. In this respect Gramond is not the only misinterpreter of Vanini. There were other Tolosans to whose unenlightened bigotry, Vanini's free, but probably not unorthodox, utterances seemed surcharged with anti-Christian implications, which we know he himself altogether deprecated and disowned.

Besides the History of Gramond, we have the MS. Memoirs of a certain M. Malenfant, who had himself also been an official of the Toulouse Parliament. These records, still carefully preserved at Toulouse, are of especial importance as partly correcting, partly supplementing the narrative of Gramond. We learn from Malenfant, for instance, what Vanini's position was in Toulouse, a point on which Gramond says nothing. So high did he stand in the estimation of Le Mazuyer, that when he was once detected *flagrante delicto* in the commission of a foul crime, and brought before the magistrates; although *process verbaux* were prepared, yet the matter was finally hushed up, because the great esteem which M. Le Mazuyer had for him was well-known, and still more the great eloquence by which the said Lucilio deceived all the world, so that he could not be affected by that which would have brought another to the stake! Farther on, he tells us that though Vanini had been suspected for some time, no man dared to accuse him, for fear of the President. Whence we perceive that our Skeptic had become, by his learning, position and associates, a personage of considerable influence in Toulouse. This fact, extorted we must remember from an unwilling witness, seems to me a sufficing answer to the extravagant calumnies which Malenfant, no less than Gramond, circulates concerning him.[1] Had only a tithe of these allegations been true and capable of proof

[1] A single instance of these rabid charges must suffice. Malenfant states: 'il estoit par trop notoire que le dict (Vanini) estoit enclin, voire entièrement empunaysi, du vilain péché de Gomorrhe; et fut arresté deux fois diverses le commettant . . . et conduit devant les magistrats, répondit en riant qu'il estoit philosophe, et par suite enclin a commettre le péché de philosophie.' Cousin has not a word of criticism on this preposterous story. On the other hand, he is inclined to believe it because it harmonizes with his inferences from the *Dialogues*; but Professor Fiorentino well asks: 'E presumibile questa dichiarazione con le gravi pene con cui allora si puniva in Francia questo delitto? Il Vanini doveva essere assolutamente un pazzo per rispondere così ai magistrati.' *Nuova Ant.*, p. 213, note.

—and according to Malenfant, the worst of them related to overt and public acts—it would not have been difficult in the 'Holy City' of Toulouse to bring the offender to the stake, still less to sever the close connexion which existed between him and Le Mazuyer. Such are the two witnesses on whom we are in a great measure dependent for information as to the final scenes of Vanini's life. Happily for the credit of philosophy, their testimony, when analysed, not only fails to establish, but does not even yield reasonable presumption for the truth of any one of the charges made against Vanini. Their bias is so marked, that unless their evidence were required, as it is by Cousin, to establish a foregone conclusion, no one would think of adopting it in its entirety. The contradictions between the different parts of their narratives are so palpable as to be ludicrous. The credulity with which they accept hearsay scandal concerning Vanini, is only equalled by their bigotry in rejecting whatever they think may redound to his credit. What their narratives prove most conclusively, is not Vanini's atheism, but their own malignity and mendacity.

Passing from the historians to the chief actors in this tragedy, there are two names which come prominently before us in the trial and condemnation of Vanini. The first is a certain Sieur de Francon, 'a pious gentleman of good character,' says Gramond; and Cousin adopts the description. 'An ignorant and narrow-minded fanatic'—would probably be a truer characterization. He plays the same part in the martyrdom of Vanini as we have seen Mocenigo played in the apprehension and death of Bruno.[1] He is the Judas Iscariot among the followers of the young philosopher. Affecting to be a disciple, and a diligent attendant at his lectures, he contrived every opportunity of 'drawing out' his impetuous and free-spoken teacher, and carefully noting what appeared heretical or dangerous propositions. Of all Vanini's hearers, he was, so far as we know, the only one whose *viva voce* evidence helped to convict him; and the fact may be accepted as some presumption of the caution of Vanini, as well as the substantial orthodoxy of his deliverances and the attachment of his hearers. If we may credit the Jesuit Garasse, this 'honest gentleman' came to Toulouse in 1618, and his arrival is therefore contemporaneous with the commencement of Vanini's troubles. By treacherously professing adherence to his freer utterances, he seems

[1] This obvious comparison is also made by Professor Fiorentino, who proceeds further to assimilate the President Gramond with the Inquisitor Sanseverino (who tried Giordano Bruno, see preceding chapter). But this is a misapprehension. Gramond was not the President who tried Vanini. See Fiorentino, *B. Telesio*, ii. p. 215.

to have wormed himself to a considerable extent into the confidence and intimate friendship of the poor unsuspecting philosopher. We are told indeed that on different occasions he was so much shocked by hearing Vanini's impieties that his hand found its way to the hilt of his dagger, and he was on the point of constituting himself both judge and executioner of the daring heretic, his holy zeal being only restrained by the common-place consideration that in the absence of all other witnesses, such an act might bear an awkward resemblance to murder. Garasse also tells us, in language of which no one can deny the appropriateness, that De Francon was 'the first who *discovered* the impieties of Vanini. De Francon may therefore be classed among the heresy-finders, who shared with their brethren, the 'witch-finders' of the same dark epoch, the honour of accepting service and receiving wages as the spies and detectives of religious fanaticism and intolerance; and who are directly responsible for much of the innocent bloodshed which stains the pages of history. The reputed action of De Francon, in the trial of Vanini, we shall shortly have to consider.

The other name is that of De Catel, the *Procureur-Général* of the king, and the secretary of the Toulouse Parliament. Almost the best established fact in the whole history is the potent instrumentality of this man in procuring the conviction and sentence of Vanini; for when all the evidence which ignorance and bigotry could array against him seemed to be on the point of failing, or was neutralized by the force and eloquence of his defence, De Catel contrived, by some means, so to change the current of his fellow-judges' sympathies, that instead of liberating Vanini, as they were minded to do, they decreed him a speedy and cruel death. This exploit is celebrated in some Latin verses affixed to the bust of De Catel in the 'Hall of the Illustrious,' in the Capitol of Toulouse.[1] Why De Catel should have manifested such animosity to a man who stood so high in the favour of Le Mazuyer, the First President of the Parliament, it is difficult to see. Leibnitz thought that he was actuated by personal spite against the President.[2] But it seems to me that religious bigotry may have

[1] 'Vel hoc uno
Memorandus quod, eo relatore,
Omnesque judices suam in sententiam
Trahente, Lucilius Vaninus insignis Atheus,
Flaminis damnatus fuerit.' Cousin, p. 85.

Cousin is characteristically doubtful whether this inscription and the deed it records are an honour or disgrace to De Catel. Had Vanini been a Frenchman and a Cartesian, Cousin would have had no doubt on the subject.

[2] *Op. om.*, Ed. Dutens, i. p. 462: 'uti fama fert,' says Leibnitz, as if this were the ordinary method of accounting for De Catel's action at that time.

been a passion sufficiently strong to account for the action of De Catel, without bringing in the additional motive of personal animosity. But besides the difficulty of accounting for De Catel's virulent hostility to Vanini, there is another and to my mind equal difficulty, *i.e.* what steps did he take to secure the sanction and co-operation of Le Mazuyer? In the extract of the register of the criminal chamber of the Parliament—the most valuable of all the original documents which Cousin's industry has discovered—the two names, that of Vanini's greatest friend and that of his unrelenting foe, stand in amicable juxtaposition. What was the secret of the enormous influence which De Catel thus evidently wielded? I think we may find it in the fact of his office as *Procureur-Général* of the king. Reading carefully the above extract, I am struck with some of its expressions. The process is affirmed to be at the request of the king's *Procureur-Général*, the finding (or final speech?) and conclusion is said to be of the king's *Procureur-Général* against Vanini. May not these words imply that De Catel, as a public and royal functionary, was employing, what might conceivably have been considerable influence at the French Court, to overawe the criminal chamber, and to procure Le Mazuyer's assent to the death of his friend.[1] The probability of some such powerful intervention seems further confirmed by another and still more remarkable expression found in the same extract. Describing the various portions of the legal process against Vanini, it mentions 'objections proposed by him against the witnesses by whom he was confronted.' What these objections were we have no means of learning. Did he appeal to Marshal Bassompierre, or others of his powerful friends? Did he protest against the oral evidence of De Francon, and demand to be judged by his witness? Some counter-testimony or influence had clearly been invoked by Vanini;[2] but to no purpose. Almost the

[1] Brücker suggests that the influence which procured the condemnation of Vanini was clerical, of which it is quite true that De Catel may have been the tool. Brücker, *Hist.*, v. 676. The recent discovery of Vanini's recantation and the threat of the Spanish Ambassador in London to bring him to the stake, prompts the suggestion that the Spanish Court may have had something to do with Vanini's death. The intercourse between the Spanish and French Courts was of a very intimate description in 1618–1619.

[2] Professor Fiorentino remarks with some probability: 'Il Vanini contava non poco su le protezioni che il suo nome gli aveva procacciate fra i magnati della Francia; contava molto ancora su l' animo di quella, ch' ei chiamava nazione generosissima ed invittissima. Dopo girata gran parte dell' Europa, ei s' era per ben due volte venuto a riposare nel suolo ospitale della Francia qui se credeva al sicuro. Ma s' ingannò su la qualità di quel paese, come s' era ingannato su la qualita dei tempi.'—*Nuova Ant.*, p. 210.

very next words of the extract are these: 'It shall be determined that the process be in a condition for definitive judgment, without information given (to the court) of the truth of the said objections.' It would hence appear that, by De Catel's influence, the final proceedings partook of the arbitrary character of the star-chamber processes not uncommon with ruling powers and functionaries in those days. And not only was Vanini thus denied the opportunity of rebutting the evidence brought against him, but the later stages of the trial were so hurried that his execution took place on the very day on which his death-warrant was signed. But whatever De Catel's motive, and the secret of his power over the Toulouse Parliament, there is no doubt of his sole ultimate responsibility for the death of Vanini; and the fact may stand to his credit so long as the foul murder of a poor wandering philosopher—an undoubted apostle of freedom—is regarded with admiration, and esteemed a worthy title of admission to the 'Hall of the Illustrious,' or, as it might be called from the qualifications of some of its occupants, the 'Chamber of Horrors,' in the Capitol of Toulouse.

Our consideration of De Catel has carried us a little too far in our narrative. We must now retrace our steps. Vanini was apprehended on the 2nd of August, 1618. As he suffered on the 9th of February in the following year, the whole process against him lasted some six months. As I have said, we have no details of these transactions; we have nothing like the official account of the examinations of Giordano Bruno, discovered in the archives of Venice. It would appear that the chief evidence adduced against him was oral. His writings were taken possession of when he was apprehended; but they were alleged to contain only dissertations on medicine and philosophy. So far as we can gather, even the *Dialogues* were not put in evidence against him. The only reference made to them was to their name and its supposed impiety; he had dared to style Nature the Queen of the Universe. It is difficult to conceive that this work could have been unknown in Toulouse; perhaps it was classed among his other writings as bearing on medicine and philosophy, and containing nothing of importance on theology. If it really was not brought forward at the trial, Cousin, by his elaborate impeachment founded on it, may claim the credit of having discovered at a distance of two centuries, and from the standpoint of an eclecticism which was nothing if not just and tolerant, the mischievous tendencies of a work which Vanini's contemporaries, urged by extreme fanaticism, failed to detect. But though we lack a particular narrative of all the interrogatories to which our unfortunate skeptic was submitted, we can extract from Gramond and Malenfant, together with the

documents which Cousin has accumulated, a fair representation of the *nature* of the proceedings.

We may then imagine ourselves in the hall where the criminal chamber of the Toulouse Parliament holds its sittings, some morning in September or October, 1618. We see before us about twelve to sixteen members of the chamber, men whose physiognomies are mostly branded with the sour austerity and gloomy fanaticism with which habitual intolerance marks its votaries. Presently the prisoner is brought in fettered and manacled and guarded by gaolers. Vanini advances slowly to the bar. He is in all respects a striking-looking man: tall, rather thin, with a student stoop of the shoulders, a face of unusual intelligence, of which the most noticeable features are a long, slightly curved nose, and large brilliant eyes, which he flashes around him with pretty much the expression of a caged lion. He has auburn hair, and the olive tint of his skin betrays his Spanish ancestry. Altogether a model of restless vivacious intelligence; as his judges are of dogged immobile stolidity. The business of the day commences. Vanini is questioned as to his belief in God; for the charge against him is *not* the spiritual crime of heresy—of which the Inquisition took cognizance—nor be it added of immorality, but the civil crime of atheism and blasphemy.[1] In reply, Vanini professes openly and readily his belief not only in God, but in the Trinity, as set forth by the Church. He picks up a bit of straw from the ground near him, and holding it up before his judges, he exclaims, 'This straw compels me to believe that there is a God.' Forthwith he commences an argument on Providence, the subject of his *Amphitheatre*, which being ended, he adds, 'Corn cast into the soil seems at first to languish and die. Presently, as if from corruption, it begins to whiten, then it becomes green and starts from the ground, it grows visibly, it is nourished with the morning dew, it is strengthened by the rain which it receives, it arms itself with pointed spiculæ to keep away the birds, it grows in the form of a stalk, and puts forth leaves; presently it becomes yellow, droops its head, languishes and dies. We thrash it, and the grain being separated from the straw, the former serves for the nourishment of man, the latter for the nourishment of animals, created for the use of man.' One of his judges, we may suppose, objects to this argument. Vanini has merely described a series of natural operations. He has written a

[1] On the subject of Vanini's indictment, Gramond shows himself ill-informed: his words are, 'postulatus corruptæ per novum dogma juventutis,' a charge of which the Inquisition took cognizance, so that Cousin's chief witness against Vanini is shown to be both ignorant and prejudiced. Cf. Fiorentino, *Nuov. Ant.*, p. 211.

work in which he calls Nature the Queen and Goddess of mortals. He might perhaps believe that these processes are accomplished by Nature herself, without the intervention of any Divine power. Whereupon Vanini again takes up his parable. 'Suppose Nature has produced this grain of corn, what has produced the other grain which has immediately preceded it. If the latter is also the product of Nature, we may go back still further, until we arrive at the first, which must needs have been created, since we cannot find any other cause of its production.'[1] Whence he concludes that God is the Author of Nature.

In imagination we can picture the gradual relaxing of the austere countenances of his judges as Vanini continues his eloquent demonstration of the Being of God.[2] Clearly the prisoner before them cannot be an Atheist. Possibly, they think, his accusers may have been mistaken, or they may have misconstrued a piece of medical or scientific lore, as if it were a theological proposition. But the favourable impression is not permitted to take effect. De Catel, who has been carefully watching the countenances of his brother judges, calls forward de Francon.[3] He at once tells the tribunal they are not to credit the specious defence of Providence to which they have just listened. In the confidence of intimate friendship, the prisoner has more than once admitted to him his utter disbelief in the being

[1] Apropos of Goethe's maxim, 'Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt hat auch Religion'—a principle which would have comprehended Vanini together with all the physicists of the Renaissance. Riemer observes, 'Wer seine Erbauung von der Structur eines Strohhalms herzunehmen versteht wie Vanini, ist so wenig Atheist wie dieser.'—*Mittheilungen über Goethe*, i. p. 190.

[2] Gramond, who relates this argumentation of Vanini, adds with his accustomed charity, that Vanini thus pleaded to show off his learning, or else from fear, not from conscience! And Cousin sarcastically remarks that 'the theodicy of this argument is superior to anything of the kind in his writings; indeed that its principle is not to be found in them at all.' This assertion is a curious proof of the degree in which national, and what is even worse, philosophical bias, may prejudice an ordinarily fair critic. The appeal to Nature and natural theology of which this argument consists, is quite in harmony with the greater portion of his writings. Indeed, it was probably this very circumstance of appealing to Nature, instead of ecclesiastical dogma or tradition, which excited the suspicions of his enemies. Cf. Arpe. *Apologia*, p. 70. They probably thought with the Lord Chancellor in the second part of *Faust*,—

'Natur und Geist, so spricht man nicht zu Christen.
Desshalb verbrennt man Atheisten.'

[3] Comp. Gramond, 'Jamque probatione ambigua dimittebatur: cum Franconus vir prosapia illustris vel hoc uno indicio vita probissimus, negatum sibi a Lucilio persæpe Deum, dataque objicit in ludibrium fidei arcana Christianæ.—*Hist. Gall.*, iii. p. 208.

of a God, asserting that Nature was the sole mistress of the universe, and her laws the supreme standards of action to which all things were bound to conform.

Replying to De Francon, we may suppose that Vanini admitted the stress he has always laid on Nature, while he distinctly denies that he has ever pushed it to the extreme indicated by his enemy; which extreme, he adds, is only the exaggeration of his own imagination; for behind Nature he has always recognized its Eternal Creator. Possibly also, he dwells on the treachery of De Francon, who, in the garb of friendship, had been contriving to take away his life. The result of the hearing we may assume, is adverse to Vanini. And as the poor prisoner is removed to his solitary cell, the cloud of fanaticism and suspicion has again settled on the visages of his judges. Comparing their mutual impressions, they could hardly help distrusting a man whose very learning made him an object of suspicion; whose presentation of well-known truths appeared strange and new-fangled; and above all, whose continual study of physical science, and whose reverence for that mysterious new-born entity called Nature, of which their forefathers had never heard, seemed open and avowed. Physical studies, we must remember, could then have to the popular mind only one signification. They were the needed preparation for the practice of alchymy, sorcery, witchcraft, or some other branch of the black art. Among the absurd stories told of Vanini, one relates to his possession of an enormous toad,[1] to which, when burnt alive, he attributed marvellous curative properties. We can therefore easily realize how completely out of sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of his hearers reasonings founded on philosophy or physical science must have been. Like a Protestant appealing to the Bible before a Bishop Bonner, or like a liberal thinker before an assembly of hostile ecclesiastics, Vanini, notwithstanding his entire innocence of the charge of atheism, stood necessarily on a different platform from his judges. They represented a past which in most places was beginning to disappear; Vanini was the augury of a future whose dawn was just becoming discernible on the horizon. Of course the vagaries of other unorthodox thinkers were well known to the Toulouse citizens. They knew the tenets of Calvinists and other Protestant sectaries, though their persons were not allowed to pollute the sacred precincts of their city; but here was a thinker of a new type, a man who studied Nature, wrote of Nature, was continually making experiments in some department of natural science, and investigating the causes of familiar pheno-

[1] 'An elegant companion,' as Arpe suggests, 'for the black dog of Agrippa.' *Apologia*, p. 14.

mena, whose very familiarity seemed no doubt to them to render the discovery of a cause needless. Such was the man they had to try. Clearly, the interval between the judges on the bench and the prisoner at the bar, though locally measurable by a few yards, was, in point of time, to be meted only by centuries. Remembering this difference of position, it seems rather wonderful that his persecutors should have had any difficulty in procuring his conviction. That there were difficulties is, however, a fact well attested. Vanini had evidently many and powerful friends, who left nothing untried to procure his acquittal. Among other steps, they endeavoured to change the accusation from atheism to heresy, in order to bring him within the jurisdiction of the Inquisition. What a comment on the sanguinary intolerance of the Toulouse Parliament, that the Holy Office, notwithstanding its nefarious proceedings, of which the *Convent de l'Inquisition* is a still existing memorial in Toulouse, should have been thought the milder and more merciful tribunal of the two.

Partly by the evidence of De Francon, but mainly by the machinations of De Catel, Vanini was condemned to die on the 9th of February, 1619;[1] and the sentence was carried into execution, as we have seen, on the same day. 'Nothing,' says Cousin, 'could save him; neither his youth, nor his learning, nor his eloquence, by which the registrar Malenfant was so profoundly affected, nor that demonstration of the existence of God, founded on a piece of straw, nor that excessive devotion, which made his gaolers say they had been given a saint to keep.' It would almost seem as if even Cousin were moved to pity by the contemplation of the poor philosopher, who for such a trifling indulgence in speculative freedom, was condemned to pay such a terrible penalty. The sentence pronounced by his death-warrant is as follows: 'The court has declared and does declare the said Ucilio attaint and convicted of the crimes of atheism, blasphemies, impieties and other crimes manifested by the process (résultant du procès), for the punishment and expiation of which it has condemned and does condemn the same Ucilio to be delivered into the hands of the executioner of justice (haulte Justice), who shall draw him upon a hurdle, in his shirt, with a halter about his neck, and bearing upon his shoulders a placard with the words, ATHEIST AND BLASPHEMER OF THE NAME OF GOD; he shall thus conduct him before the principal entrance to the metropolitan church of St. Stephen, and being there placed on his knees with head and feet naked, holding in his hands a lighted wax-torch, he shall ask pardon

[1] By a curious coincidence, Giordano Bruno was also condemned on the 9th of February, just nineteen years before. As an Italian philosopher, Professor Fiorentino might well exclaim, 'Nefasto giorno il 9 Febbraio!'

from God, from the King, and from Justice for his said blasphemies; afterwards he shall bring him into the Place of Salin, and, bound to a stake there erected, he shall cut off his tongue,[1] and strangle him, and afterwards his body shall be burnt at the stake-fire there prepared, and the ashes thrown to the wind.'

This iniquitous sentence was immediately carried out. The unfortunate martyr to philosophy and free-thought was thus ignominiously drawn on a hurdle through the streets of the 'Holy City,' pursued no doubt by the cries and hootings of its pious fanatics. His behaviour, like that of Bruno, was marked by the utmost fortitude. His enemies have indeed endeavoured to represent him as suffering like an enraged wild beast, or like a madman venting his blasphemies and execrations on all around; and have thus bespattered their lying venom over the final scenes of his life just as they have over the earlier portion of it. Happily without success. Incidentally, and in spite of themselves, they are compelled to admit Vanini's constancy.[2] On coming forth from the prison to take his place on the hurdle, he uttered in his mother-tongue the exclamation, 'Andiamo, andiamo allegramente a morire da filosofo,' 'Let us go, let us go joyfully to die, as becomes a philosopher.' This he repeated more than once. His enemies, like those of Bruno, and probably actuated by a similar motive of justifying a deed whose cruel atrocity, though couched under legal forms, covered all concerned with indelible odium, have tried to make capital out of his supposed rejection of the consolations of religion. During his former life at Toulouse, and even during his imprisonment, he had scrupulously attended to his religious duties; but after his condemnation he had gone back, said they, to his old blasphemies and impieties (they are careful not to tell us that his condemnation preceded his execution by only a few hours). Nay, he had even spurned the crucifix held out for his adoration. We may

[1] In Masini's *Sacro Arsenale o Pratica del Sant Ufficio*, the reason of this barbarous punishment is thus given: 'Quando isti pertinaces vivo igne cremantur eorum lingua alliganda est, ne si libere loqui possint astantes impiis blasphemiis offendant.' The step from gagging to cutting out the tongue was soon taken. As a punishment for blasphemy the latter barbarity was suppressed in France under Cardinal Richelieu.

[2] This is proved on the unquestionable testimony of the *Mecure de France*, quoted by Cousin, 'Vanini, dit il, mourut avec autant de constance, de patience et de volonté qu'aucun autre homme que l'on ait vu.'—*Frag.*, p. 90. Even the Jesuit Garasse admits Vanini's indomitable courage. According to M. C. Fournier, in vol. ix. of the *Variétés Historiques et Literaires* (p. 278, note 2) 'Il subit avec un fier courage que le P. Garasse lui même ne put qu'admirer,' 'Lucilio Vanini et ses compagnons dit il en son *Apologie* ont quelque froide excuse en leur impieté scavoir; une resolution philosophique que les porte au mespris de la mort, et de là les jette furieusement jusques à celui de leur âme.'

say of him as we have already said of Bruno: Even were this true, there are few humane Christians of our time who would not thoroughly sympathise with his rejection of a symbol which had become in the polluted hands of those who bare it, the perverted mark, not of mercy, kindness, and love, but of inhuman intolerance and brutal cruelty. If any act could be diametrically opposed to the teaching of the gospel and the spirit of its Founder, it was this which was now being carried out ostensibly under their hallowed sanctions. The *consolations* of any religion, which might be truly held, not only to justify, but to require such atrocities, could have been nothing else but the most horrible and cruel mockery. We may hope that Vanini, possessed in the consciousness of rectitude, in the feeling that he had employed his Divine gift of reason for the purposes intended by its giver, in the conviction that a just God could never punish an honest inquirer for speculative error, and in the persuasion that his death must forward the cause of philosophic freedom, consolations of a purer kind than those which his enemies would have forced upon him.

Of the last scenes of this mournful tragedy we possess few further details. When the poor, half-naked philosopher, bound on a hurdle and escorted by the mob of Toulouse, arrived at the church of St. Stephen, what was the nature of his confessions? One thing we are certain of: his utter and indignant refusal to admit his guilt. Had he evinced, in this trying hour, the least sign of weakness, we may be sure his enemies would have gladly reported it. Either his remonstrances against the cruel treatment to which he was subjected were construed by his malicious foes into the blasphemies with which they charge him,[1] or else his dignified silence might have been interpreted as a stubborn determination to continue in his error. When this grotesque farce is ended, the hurdle again moves on, and presently arrives at the place of execution, and the next scene of barbarity is enacted. Vanini is taken and bound securely to the stake. The executioner then requests him to put forth his tongue, in order that the sentence of its amputation might be carried out. Vanini of course refuses—not perhaps that his human feeling shrank from the torture, though this surely would be only natural, but he would not, by any act of his,

[1] Gui Patin gives one version of the story circulated by his enemies as to Vanini's confession, "Quand on lui dit de demander pardon à Dieu, au Roy et a la Justice; il répondit, qu'il ne croyoit pas qu'il y eut de Dieu, qu'il n'avoit jamais offense le Roy, et qu'il donnoit la Justice au Diable, sil y en avoit.' —*Patiniana*, p. 53. For other versions of this story cf. Cousin, p. 90 note. It is easy to see how the story originated. Having once determined that Vanini was an Atheist, it was not difficult to make him talk as one. The reported utterances of most heretics are *ex post facto* adaptations to their assumed opinions.

sanction the iniquitous proceedings of which he was made a victim. Alas! his refusal avails not. His mouth is forcibly wrenched open, the shrinking tongue is seized with iron pincers and drawn so far forward that the executioner's knife can do its work. In this moment of supreme agony Vanini's resolution for a single instant gave way. The stream of blood which followed the brutal operation was accompanied by a loud and violent shriek of pain. We must hope that the strangling which ended his torture was accomplished as speedily as possible, and that the poor martyr to Free-thought had not long to suffer. When he was dead, his body, with his once intelligent features distorted and bloody, was consumed to ashes by the fire prepared for the purpose, at the stake.

Gramond's relation of this terrible scene is too remarkable to be left unnoticed. Besides being one more added to the numberless examples of the brutalizing effects of religious intolerance, there is a grim kind of fitness in allowing the words of bigotry to recount its own acts.

'Before putting fire to the stake,' he says, 'Vanini was ordered to put forth his sacrilegious tongue for the knife. He refused; it was necessary to employ pincers to draw it forth, and when the executioner's instrument seized and cut it off never was heard a more horrible cry. One might have thought that he heard the bellowing of an ox[1] which was being slaughtered.'

Even Cousin, who has followed the proceedings against Vanini with more than philosophic equanimity—who has a good word for each of the actors in the tragedy,[2]—is repelled by this wanton exhibi-

[1] The language of all fanatics and persecutors is closely akin. Calvin characterized the frantic rage ending with the plaintive wail 'misericordia misericordia!' with which Servetus heard his horrible sentence, as 'beluina stupiditas.'

[2] Nothing proves more clearly Cousin's animus against Vanini than the contrast between the elaborate impeachment of the *Dialogues*, and the characters assigned to the chief agents and historians of his fate.

Notwithstanding Gramond's well-known character as a mean-spirited, ignorant fanatic, he is credited with enlightenment and integrity, and the facts he recounts Cousin declares he accepts *without reserve*, p. 72.

Notwithstanding the palpable inconsistencies in Malenfant's narrative Cousin accepts this also without reserve.

Of De Francon, Cousin adopts without question the character given by Gramond: 'a man of high integrity, of which his conduct in the case of Vanini is held to be a sufficing proof.'

De Catel is described in terms which are worth quoting: 'Catel, il faut le dire, etait un homme ardent, mais honnête et éclairé. Il est l'auteur d'une histoire estimée des comtes de Toulouse.'—P. 85. The bearing of the last fact upon the relentless persecution of Vanini by this *enlightened* individual is not stated.

tion of inhumanity. 'In truth,' he says, 'that which here penetrates me with horror is not so much the atrocious punishment of Vanini (which is at least candid) as the manner in which Gramond relates it. What? An unfortunate wretch! found guilty of erring in philosophy, and solving the problem of the universe in a manner contrary to that of Plato and St. Augustine,[1] is tortured at pleasure before being strangled and burnt. And because he hesitates to lend himself to a refinement of cruelty, a pious man, a magistrate, writing at his ease in his study, treats him so shamefully! so that if pain or rage extorted a final cry from the victim, he compares it to the bellowing of an ox which is being slain. O impious justice! sanguinary fanaticism! Tyranny at once both odious and impotent! Do you think that it is with pincers that you can tear the human mind from error? And do you not perceive that the flames which you set blazing, by exciting the horror of all generous minds, protect and propagate the doctrines which you persecute'—*deservedly* persecute is clearly Cousin's implication. Here, as elsewhere, there is a tacit but gratuitous assumption of Vanini's guilt as an Atheist, and a half-acquiescence in his punishment. It is the brutality of the deed that Cousin deprecates. Had the Tolosans drowned their victim in rose-water and sprinkled the same liquid over the records of their proceedings, there would not have been so much to find fault with. He would, it appears to me, have conferred a much greater service on philosophy if instead of this declamatory and superficial indignation, his moralising on the death of Vanini had taken the form of an inquiry:—(1) How far, setting all prepossessions and doubtful testimony aside, Vanini's atheism is to be concluded from the *Dialogues*? (2) Whether the mischief resulting from speculative beliefs, even of an extreme kind, provided they are honestly and unobtrusively maintained, is equal to that which arises from their forcible repression by acts of injustice and

[1] Cousin here says nothing of the formidable indictment of Immorality which he drew up against the *Dialogues*, a fact which proves how little real hold on his convictions that charge must have had. On this point the evidence of Bayle, who abode at Toulouse for some months and had ample opportunities of learning the most trustworthy traditions respecting Vanini's character, is of some importance. He says, 'Le detestable (!) Vanini, qui fut brûlé à Toulouse pour son atheisme l'an 1619, avoit toujours été *assez reglé dans ses mœurs*, et quiconque eut entrepris de lui faire un procès criminel sur toute autre chose que sur ses dogmes, auroit couru grand risque *d'être convaincu de colomnie*.'—*Pensées Diverses ecrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne*, Œuv. Div., V. iii. p. 111. But in truth the charge is sufficiently rebutted by its inherent absurdity, its utter incompatibility with the studious pursuits, the industrious habits, and the temperate life of Vanini, as well as by his constant association with such men as Le Mazuyer, not to mention the fact that it was not so much as alluded to in the proceedings against him.

inhumanity. (3) The effect of excessive dogma, and intolerance (its natural ally), in suppressing the best feelings and exciting the worst passions of our nature.

Thus perished Vanini, in the prime of youth and manly beauty, under circumstances of treachery and barbarity, not easy to be paralleled even in the dark records of religious intolerance. It has been said that to his martyrdom he is mainly indebted for his celebrity; and that his works are of little value. To this I reply: (1) that a fair estimate of Vanini from his writings we are unable to make; for out of some dozen different treatises[1] on various points of Religion and Philosophy, which he admits to have written, we have left only the two to which I have called your attention. (2) So far as our evidence extends, Vanini cannot be pronounced a thinker of the first rank; nor, I think, did he exercise, except incidentally by his martyrdom, any appreciable influence on the thought of modern Europe.[2] Still he is not without considerable merits. (*a*) He formed one of that band of physicists who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries attempted, however imperfectly, to investigate Nature; and to whom as the genuine founders of modern science, we still owe a heavy debt of gratitude. (*b*) He was an independent thinker when independent thought was both a rare and dangerous characteristic. (*c*) He was a restless but undoubted truth-seeker in every branch of human speculation. His works may be of no great value now; any more than are those of his master Pomponazzi, or his contemporaries Cardan, Telesius, Agrippa, Fracastor, etc.; but, when they were published, they were eminently calculated, by their freedom of thought, their novelty of matter, and their wide range of investigation, to awaken curiosity and to stimulate enquiry. Indeed, the effect of Vanini's *Dialogues* upon thinking men with liberal sympathies, who had been educated in the narrow dogmatism of the day, whether Catholic or Huguenot, must have been like the shock of a cold bath or an electric battery. His enemies, who had scattered his ashes to the wind, did their utmost to exterminate his writings; and with such success that his works, especially the *Dialogues*, have now become exceedingly rare.[3] Nevertheless we may say of him, as was said of Servetus, that his death-flame gave more light to the world than all his writings. Judged by his works, the only method left of judging Vanini, every impartial critic must admit

[1] See the complete list in Durandus, *Vie*, pp. 259-260.

[2] Note on his disciples in *Tallemant de Reaux*, etc.

[3] 'Il est devenu très-rare,' say the authors of the *Dictionnaire Historique*, 'parce qu'on le supprima dès sa naissance.' Gui Patin states that when some booksellers in Holland wished to reprint Vanini's works, they were prevented by the magistrates. *Patiniana*, p. 53.

that he is by no means free from blemishes; but his weaknesses seem to me due to his youth, and the liveliness of his Southern temperament. His restless eagerness, and enormous vanity, I should ascribe to the former source; while the latter is, I think, accountable for a certain lack of intellectual concentration, of sustained and profound thought, of consistent and systematic reasoning, which I should be inclined to call his greatest mental defect.

His skepticism forms the main element of his intellectual character. He had, by his own enquiries and reflections, learnt to distrust much that men of his time believed with unquestioning faith. He had explored Nature, Science, Philosophy and Theology, and returned from the quest weary and disappointed, with the lament of the Hebrew skeptic, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,'—nevertheless he had evidently coerced his faith to an expressed belief in some of the dogmas of the Church; but it might not be true to say that his convictions were in every case on a level with his religious creed. Like Pomponazzi and others of our skeptics, or, like Faraday, in our own times, he may have been one of those men whose religious life resembles a secluded temple reared quite apart from the haunts of men, and even from their own ordinary existence,—a retired region of the soul, removed, sometimes by no small distance, from philosophical and scientific conclusions,—a closet with the door shut in which they hold secret communion with the Eternal. It would be both unjust and ungenerous to pronounce such a religious faith hypocritical, however unsatisfactory it might seem on a complete view of a man's spiritual formation, and the entire harmony, consistency and homogeneity which ought to pervade it.

But while granting this as a possibility, I must admit as a strong probability, that the religious moiety of his philosophico-religious organization was somewhat less serenely firm and devotional than that of Pomponazzi and other Bi-partite thinkers among skeptics. It appears to have approximated occasionally to the scornful contempt for tyrannical orthodoxy manifested by his fellow martyr Giordano Bruno. His frequently expressed submission to the Church as a system of extraneous coercion, is mostly yielded distinctly, but occasionally with an ill grace, and not without a suspicion of *arrière pensée*.[1] Sometimes the feeling engendered by ecclesiastical despotism is a half-suppressed recalcitration, at other times it is marked by an expression of disdain and impatience, as when he says that he leaves theology to Sorbonne Doctors;[2] at other times it assumes the form of a covert sneer, reminding one of Galileo's ironical deference to ecclesiastical authority, as when he quotes the proverb *Il credere è cortesia;*[3] and in one single instance I am inclined to suspect him of something

[1] *Dial.* pp. 339–456. [2] P. 235. [3] P. 472.

like ribald mockery, as when *e.g.* he recommends persons suffering from biliousness not to take medicine but to have recourse to the sacrament,[4] though it might be urged on the other hand that the practice of receiving the eucharist fasting might give some medical efficacy to the prescription; or that the superstitious materialism pertaining to the popular conception of the sacrament warranted a certain measure of ridicule. But as often as we meet with such instances, a sense of ordinary justice will prompt us to make allowance for the circumstances of the case. It was not that Vanini had made no attempts to obtain a form of Christianity that did not fetter his reason and stultify his moral convictions. Like his compatriot Bruno, he made experiment of all the chief forms of Christianity then existing. Born a Roman Catholic, and taking Orders in that Church, he recanted on his visit to England (if we may trust the recent discoveries I have noticed), his old creed, and tried to find more philosophical liberty in the English Church. Unhappily the attempt failed. The Protestantism of Geneva and Canterbury he found as intolerant as the ecclesiasticism of Rome, and perhaps at that particular period even more impatient of philosophical freedom. That he went back to the older Church does not excite in me the least feeling of surprise. As a philosopher pledged to discreet reticence on questions of dogma, he found in Romanism, which unofficially recognized such a subdivision of intellectual energies, freer play for his activities than in a sombre and gloomy Protestantism, which refused to admit any such distinction; nevertheless, it seems a pity he had not so much philosophical insight into the comparative principles of the opposite religions, and their necessary eventual operation on the laws of Protestant England and Catholic France, as to have cast in his lot with the latter. As it was, if Anglicanism committed him to the Tower, Romanism condemned him to the stake.

Crimes against philosophy are not wont to be more successful than those committed against religion; and although the ashes and charred remains of Vanini, like those of Bruno just nineteen years before, were scattered to the wind, and their works were destroyed wherever they could be found, yet the spirit of which these young Italians were exponents—the spirit of free thought—rose like a phœnix from the embers of those murderous stake-fires. Vanini was one of the last instances in modern Europe of a thinker of some note being put to death for free philosophical speculation. The sun of modern science and religious liberty, which was destined to put out the lurid flames of bigotry and superstition, was already above the horizon. While his disfigured and mangled corpse was being consumed at Toulouse,

[4] P. 349.

Bacon in a freer atmosphere had completed a new system of philosophy and natural enquiry, much of which coincides in form and substance with Vanini's *Dialogues*. Galileo had set on foot a method of direct observation and experiment still more irreconcilable with the claims of ecclesiasticism, and more in harmony with modern scientific research, and Descartes was preparing the way for the Skeptical philosophy which was destined, with that of Bacon and others, to revolutionize the thought of Europe. Henceforth, mental freedom of every kind—of philosophical speculation, scientific research and religious belief—began to flourish and increase; and though religious intolerance, in modified and stealthy forms, is by no means yet extinct, yet scenes of barbarity like that consummated in Toulouse on the 19th of February, 1619, have happily, become no longer possible in any country in Europe. Vanini's influence on contemporaries and disciples I have already admitted was of a personal rather than a literary kind. At the same time it probably partook of the diversity of character for which he himself was also famed. The Naturalism of the *Dialogues*, which he shared with the poet Marino and so many other teachers of his time, was a feature not likely to be forgotten by his disciples, or by his theological adversaries. In a curious piece, entitled '*Effroyable factions entre le Diable et les Invisibles*, published in 1623,[1] and therefore four years after Vanini's death; and which is a kind of satire on the free-thinkers of the time; we are told that these invisible beings do not believe in the immortality of the soul; their creed being Epicuræanism, teaching the same lesson and method as did that Italian philosopher who was burnt at Toulouse by decree of the Parliament of that place in 1619.' But Vanini's teachings, confirmed by his death at the hands of the Romish Church, were just as likely to have produced thinkers who merely interpreted his Naturalism as a kind of irregular Protestantism; and as teaching the freedom of the individual and the obligation of natural laws, in opposition to the violent repression of nature, which was the object of ecclesiastical asceticism and monasticism. Tallemant des Reaux, in his well-known Memoirs, has left on record two of Vanini's disciples, one of whom Le Baron de Panat, was a Huguenot of some celebrity.[2] The other, the Comte de Cramail, a Gascon, was the author of what the memoirist calls[3] 'une assez plaisante chose.' He said that to make the two religions, Romanism and Protestantism accord, it was only necessary to place *vis-à-vis* those articles on

[1] See *Variétés Historiques et Literaires*, Biblioth. Elzev., ix. 278.

[2] *Mem.*, ii. 28. Ed. Bruxelles. M. Phil. Chasles says of him, 'Le baron de Panat disciple de Vanini et ami de Théophile faisait des proselytes á Toulouse.' —*Études sur l'Espagne*, p. 385.

[3] *Mem.*, ii. 21.

which both were fully agreed, and then to proclaim that 'whosoever held them would be saved.' Whether this easy method of religious comprehension was due to the teaching of Vanini we do not know, but it is not unworthy of his hatred of intolerance and his undoubted contempt for sectarian and dogmatic distinctions. Other possible disciples of Vanini we might probably meet on a fuller consideration of the skeptical friends and associates of Rabelais, Montaigne and Théophile de Viau among the leading spirits of the French Renaissance.[1] In spite of the cruel injustice Vanini has received not only at the hands of his natural foes, the theologians, but also, as in the case of Cousin, from those to whom he might have looked, if not for friendship, at least for philosophical impartiality, his memory is again cherished by his fellow countrymen. With the recovery of her long-lost liberty, Italy is turning her maternal regards and affectionate regrets to the memories of those noble sons, pioneers of European free-thought, to whom she gave birth in the fourteenth and two following centuries; but who, as children of a slave-mother, were driven from their homes and compelled to seek a precarious subsistence, and often to find death, in foreign lands. The attachment of these poor wanderers to their native country—second only to their passion for liberty and truth—is a distinctly marked feature in their character. Sometimes, as in the case of Bruno, it lured them, like a wrecker's light, to their destruction. Vanini dwells again and again in his writings on the beloved Taurisano of his birth; he recounts the incidents of his early childhood, the stories told him by his mother; the people, and events of his youthful and happier life. Did some reminiscence of his paternal home, of his affectionate mother, of the woods and valleys of Taurisano, 'that fairest of all lands,' 'that precious stone in the ring of the globe,' as he enthusiastically called it, occur to his mind in the Toulouse prison, or during his final torture at the stake. Most probably they did. At least it affords matter for gratification that the country so fervently loved by him has recently begun to reciprocate that affection, now consigned to oblivion for two centuries and a half. On the 24th of September, 1868, a bust of the philosopher of Taurisano was placed in the district hall (Sala della Deputazione Provinciale) of Lecce, the chief town of his native province. The house in which he first saw the light that thirty-four years after was so miserably put out at Toulouse, is still carefully preserved; and now Taurisano has no higher boast, and no more valued historical possession, than that she was the birthplace of Julius Cæsar Vanini.

[1] See Nisard, vol. i., or any other good history of French Literature; and comp. Phil. Chasles, *Études sur l'Espagne*, p. 385.

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ARUNDEL. I am sorry to find that Cousin's interesting fragment on Vanini is untrustworthy, though I was aware of his prejudice against the Thinkers of the Renaissance. At the same time I hope, Doctor, you have not been guilty of the opposite error of whitewashing an unworthy character, because he claims the twofold merit of being a skeptic and a martyr. Like Bayle and Lessing, you are fond of rehabilitating suspected thinkers.

MISS LEYCESTER. Surely a venial error in a philosopher, Mr. Arundel. At least it is one with which I most heartily sympathize. Knowing the difficulties which beset the path of the original thinker, we may easily forgive a few deviations, or an occasional stumble, even when they can be proved to be such. Who was that saint who enjoyed the honourable distinction of being called 'the Advocate of the Absent'? If I were a theologian, I should enjoy the rôle of 'Defender of the Heretic,' provided, *i.e.*, that the heresy was fairly and honestly come by, which I am heretical enough to believe it really was in most instances.

TREVOR. If you mean, Arundel, that I have tried to scrape off some of the superfluous blackness with which religious bigotry has befouled Vanini's character—of course I plead guilty, albeit this is not whitewashing, but merely restoring the denigrated object to its original and true colour. In the absence of all other reliable testimony, Vanini's character, intellectual and moral, must needs be inferred from his written works; and, so far as I can see, they do not afford ground for the sweeping charges made by divers hostile critics, last of all by Cousin. Vanini, though a skeptic, was neither the Atheist nor the profligate that he has been represented. I have arrived at this conclusion from an examination of his own works; and most of the historians who have treated of him are of the same opinion.[1] It is only the small fry of atheist-hunters, men who conceive that the strength of their own prejudices enables them to dispense with extraneous testimony and the investigation of authentic records, who have pro-

[1] Among those who pronounce against the atheism of Vanini are Brücker, *Hist. Phil.*, v. 680.

nounced judgment against him. Moreover, as the case of Vanini is somewhat peculiar, I have asked Harrington to give us the benefit of his legal training, and to look into the cause of 'Cousin *v.* Vanini,' and to tell us how far he thinks Cousin's imputations of atheism and immorality are justified by the *Dialogues*.

MISS LEYCESTER. How very interesting! I had no idea that 'Mr. Justice Harrington' was to be officially employed on this occasion, or we might have brought his gown and wig with us to emphasize his decision. By the way, if we had thought of it sooner, we might have re-tried Vanini among ourselves, Charles being judge, Mr. Arundel and Dr. Trevor respectively counsel for the prosecution and defence, while Mrs. Arundel, Miss Trevor, Maria and myself constituted the jury.

ARUNDEL. I should *in limine* have objected to your presence on the jury, Miss Leycester. You are already too far committed in the case.

MISS LEYCESTER. Oh! for that matter, so is Charles there. I remember what he said, when our present subject was proposed about Vanini being a fire-brand or something of that kind.

HARRINGTON. That was an extra-judicial decision, Florence. Then I had not looked into the whole of the evidence. Now, thanks to Dr. Trevor's loan of his very rare copy of the *Dialogues*, I am able to give a more deliberate judgment on the subject:—

I may say at once, that as a matter of legal inquiry, Cousin is very far indeed from having substantiated his charges—for interpreting the *Dialogues* by the rules we ordinarily apply to written or documentary evidence, it is clear that Vanini can be held responsible only for his own expressed opinions; not for those of disciples, still less of persons whom he mentions as having met here and there in his travels. Now, as a rule, Vanini's own opinions, at least those that are deliberately placed in his own mouth, are put forth with some caution and restraint; and fall far short of the extravagances with which Alexander is occasionally credited, and the Free-thinkers with whom he conversed from time to time. Of course it is quite conceivable that Vanini really shared those extreme beliefs,

which from a motive of prudence he fathers upon other thinkers; at least they must have had in many cases his sympathy. Still this, even if admitted, does not yield us more than a presumption, though it might be made to assume an aspect of some probability. Such a grave accusation as atheism, could only be sustained on the clearest and most irrefragable evidence. Indeed the thing implied is of such a complex, subtile and delicate nature, that if I were 'trying' a supposed Atheist I should refuse even his own plea of 'guilty' until I was sure that he was fully aware of all the implications such a charge involved. To illustrate what I mean, I should decline to consider Harriet Martineau as really an Atheist, or the hero of Balzac's *Messe d'un Athée*, notwithstanding their own protestations.

While then I consider Cousin's indictment of atheism falls completely to the ground as regards legal proof, I also think it fails as a matter of ordinary criticism or literary equity. Of course the critic in his interpretation of evidence is not bound by the rules which govern judicial proceedings. He may rely upon evidence indirect and circumstantial, or fragmentary and incomplete, to an extent which no criminal judge would feel justified in doing. So far, no doubt, Cousin's procedure is that commonly employed by adverse critics, few of whom would think themselves debarred from pronouncing a verdict merely on the ground that the evidence was not such as would satisfy a law court or an intelligent jury. And it is quite open to Cousin to argue, that the whole of the *Dialogues* being, though not written and published, yet finally approved by Vanini, he is really responsible for all their utterances, and that the most advanced opinions of pretended Atheists and disciples harmonize completely with the general tone of his own life and character; but even in this case his proofs are insufficient. I have, like yourself, Doctor, collated Cousin's extracts with the *Dialogues*, and have placed the passages in juxtaposition in that 'brief' lying on the table, and I am quite surprised at the enormous conclusions which he extorts from insignificant premisses, and at the delusion which could have imagined that proofs of the kind he offers would be accepted as valid by any well-informed critic. He must, I think, have relied

on the scarcity of the *Dialogues*, and the improbability of any one comparing his impressions of the book with the original.

But though I agree with your paper as to Cousin's unfairness, and the insufficiency of his proofs both of Vanini's atheism and of his immorality, I cannot say that I quite agree with your estimate of our skeptic's character. Partly from constitutional timidity, partly from other causes, he was, I think, a kind of intellectual Reuben, 'unstable as water'—the very embodiment of vacillation and uncertainty. For myself I should think it hazardous to credit him with any definite conviction, whether positive or negative. He may have been an Atheist, though I think it quite improbable; and Cousin certainly has not proved him one. And he may have been a devout Theist, though I cannot say that your paper, Doctor, has convinced me of the fact. What I am sure of is, that he was a Skeptic; and even his skepticism I should qualify with the presupposition of his remaining in the same intellectual condition for any great length of time. This is the root from which all his idiosyncrasies spring; the common source of the apparent duplicity, and the real irresolution, with which he is charged. Hence I no longer regard his somewhat reckless assertions as the result of boldness or foolhardy courage; but as a kind of spasmodic protest against, and therefore the outcome of, a timid nervous nature; just as we find blustering and loud language often employed by naturally shy people in order to dissemble their weakness, or by nervous people to veil their want of courage.

I may add that as to Vanini's immorality, not only do the *Dialogues* fail to prove it, except by methods which would include all the physicists of that time in a common accusation; but all the fair presumptions of the case, as to character, pursuits, etc., etc., are altogether opposed to such an imputation.

ARUNDEL (banteringly). 'Who shall decide when doctors disagree'? It would seem that the diversity of opinion which has always marked Vanini's critics is destined to continue. Under the circumstances, it cannot appear disrespectful to you, while it is a fitting tribute to Vanini's Protean qualities, if I venture to dissent from both your rulings. At least I think it probable that Vanini may have been an Atheist, though not

in precisely the way in which your paper, Doctor! denied it. Looking to his enthusiasm for Nature, and the effect of that enthusiasm on his predecessors and contemporaries, I think it likely he may have been what I should call, if the term were allowed, a Pantheistic Atheist. Like Bruno, he may have recognized God in all the works of Nature, and yet have denied, by implication, that He is anything else but the impersonal cause of natural phenomena.

TREVOR. We need not again reopen the general question, discussed in our Bruno chapter, how far a certain amount of Pantheism is a necessary ingredient in Christian orthodoxy, and involved in the ascription to Deity of such qualities as omnipresence, etc. Bruno, no doubt, had pantheistic tendencies; though, as we saw reason to think, he was a religious if not a Christian Pantheist. As to Vanini, while largely partaking of the same tendencies, he takes especial care that his opinions shall not be identified with any form of Naturalism which banishes the Creator out of His universe. He tells us, *e.g.*, that as a Christian he disavows the doctrine of the eternity of matter, and is dissatisfied with Plato's identification of God with the universe.[1]

HARRINGTON. You did well to put in the conditional clause 'as a Christian'; for he expressly asserts elsewhere that if he were not a Christian he should feel compelled to believe in the eternity of matter; though I grant this may only imply that excessive deference to the authority of the Church which even Augustine made the motive of his Christianity.

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TREVOR. We have of course no right to make it mean more than that. Every *authoritative* system of faith must, in very equity, be satisfied with a more or less constrained adherence. It has no right to *demand* any other; and if Vanini felt the coercion more than other thinkers in his position would have done, the sensibility was constitutional—the inevitable result of his vigorous and independent intellect. There are mental, just as there are physical, organizations utterly impervious to anodynes and anæsthetics. But I must strongly protest against your exaggerated opinion of Vanini's vacillation. There are

[1] Comp. *Dialogues*, pp. 28–94.

principles distinctly impressed both on the *Amphitheatre* and the *Dialogues* from which he never wavered, so far as his writings can be accepted as proof, by a hair's-breadth. Moreover, I think you have made a wrong inference from the undoubted variety of Vanini's views and speculations. That their diversity amounts to what we cannot help calling inconsistency, I readily grant; and on that ground I think a complete consensus as to the real purport of his views will be always difficult; but I am by no means sure that his opinions presented themselves to him as inconsistent. His omnivorous appetite for all kinds of knowledge was, to his own consciousness, only an omnivorous appetite for all varieties of truth. In that centre of his speculations all his investigations converged, and his manifold researches were hallowed by the sacred character of their object. Further, the intrepidity with which he met his fate is of itself a sufficient proof that he was not the mere giddy trifler which your judgment represented him.

HARRINGTON. My judgment was founded entirely upon his writings, whose inconsistencies you allow. I am far, however, from thinking that the conclusion to which they seem to point ought not to be modified by the heroic manner in which he seems to have met his fate.

ARUNDEL. What I am especially delighted to acknowledge as the fruit of our Vanini evening discussion is, that he seems to be completely exonerated from the charges of immorality so commonly brought against him. I have just been glancing at Harrington's 'brief,' in which Cousin's charges are placed *vis-à-vis* with the passages from the *Dialogues* on which they are professedly founded; and I share your feelings of mingled surprise and indignation that a man in Cousin's position should have 'trumped up' such a charge. On that point, Doctor, I now quite concur with you, that Vanini needed not so much whitewashing as scraping off the mud so malignantly thrown at him. For the rest, however, I think we may dispense with further inquiry as to Vanini's doctrines; notwithstanding surface-differences, we are fairly agreed as to his intellectual predilections. His overt professions we must not lay much stress on. They were evidently so moulded, and no doubt distorted, by the over-mastering influences of religious dogmatism

without, and constitutional infirmity within, that like a stunted tree, or any other malformation in Nature, we can only guess dimly at the probable character of the development, supposing it possessed ample freedom to evolve at 'its own sweet will.'

Miss Leycester. I think you and Charles might have ascertained these 'extenuating circumstances' a little sooner, Mr. Arundel. It seems impossible for men born free to do justice to the feelings or conduct of slaves. Many of Vanini's utterances were no doubt hardly freer than if they had been extorted from him by the rack. If he had not had implicit confidence in his hearers, he must have spoken every sentence in his share of the *Dialogues* with the fear of the Sorbonne and the Inquisition before his eyes; surely some allowance should be made for a man in such a position. I maintain that he was justified, under the circumstances, in putting, if he did so, some of his more dangerous tenets into the mouths of anonymous thinkers; partly to invite general criticism, partly as problems on which he might exercise his own dialectical ingenuity. In every age, and in most subjects of controversy, there are always extreme opinions in secret circulation, which owe their importance and their supposed dangerous qualities to the fact of their suppression, and which lose those qualities when they are brought boldly into the arena of open discussion, just as noxious subterranean gases lose their ill-qualities when intermingled with the free atmosphere. The fact that some of these speculations shocked his benighted contemporaries, is no proof that they were extreme, or even moderately heterodox. To a man who has undergone a successful operation for blindness, a farthing candle would seem brilliant sunshine. Allowance, too, should be made for the undoubted right of every philosophic mind to project itself occasionally into the future, even if such attempts present the appearance of blind guesses. The advance of knowledge is like that of an army, in which the main body is preceded by out-posts and skirmishers. Hence the dim guesses of the past become the convictions of the present and the truisms of the future. Tennyson pushes this right of knowledge almost to an undue excess.

'She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance.'[1]

ARUNDEL. Your plea is unsatisfactory, Miss Leycester! for however intolerant the Inquisition, the Sorbonne, or the Toulouse Parliament, there was no compulsion to force Vanini to indite the *Dialogues*, and thus challenge their tyranny.

MISS LEYCESTER. No external compulsion, I grant, but no small amount of internal coercive prompting-thoughts and energising-ideas demanding with resistless importunity some form of expression—an inferior kind in Vanini's case, because no doubt largely tainted with personal vanity, but still some kind of what I should call philosophical inspiration, according to the old Jewish idea of prophetic utterance, which makes it the half-conscious deliverance of thoughts and feelings which *cannot* be repressed. In addition to these internal forces there was also, if I mistake not, the profound conviction that his career would be short. I think this is shown in several places of his works, *e.g.* in the first *Dialogue* in Rousselot's Translation; and it would account in some measure for the marvellous literray activity which enabled him to write so many works before he was thirty years of age. He felt that he had no time to lose if he would 'say his say' before quitting existence.

HARRINGTON. I fear you are constructing an ideal Vanini, Florence, from imaginary materials supplied by your admiration of his Free-thought and your sympathy with his miserable fate. The Parliament of Toulouse would agree with you that he was inspired; the important question remains, By whom?

MRS. HARRINGTON. Was there no free section of French Protestants to which Vanini might have joined himself when he found his religious convictions gradually separating him from the Church of Rome and that of England?

HARRINGTON. Unluckily not. Religious liberty and toleration were almost more alien to the feelings and prejudices of the Huguenot than to those of the Romanist; and Vanini might have fared just as badly in Geneva as he did in Toulouse. In fact, extreme dogmatism, as we too well know, is independent both of creed and ecclesiastical organization; and Luther, Calvin, Beza, and, as Vanini discovered, Archbishop Abbot,

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxiv.

were as autocratic and intolerant as a Roman pontiff.[1] Moreover, even if there had been Protestants to whom Vanini's free-thinking tendencies would have been congenial, it is by no means probable that he would have availed himself of the opportunity of joining them. Malenfant tells us that he entertained feelings of bitter hostility towards the Reformers; and that these sentiments were returned with interest by the objects of them. There may be so much truth in the report that Vanini, like Montaigne and Bruno, found cause to dislike the narrowness and bigotry which generally characterized the Protestants, and was really much more at home with cultured and liberal Romanists. Vanini's misfortune, as well as Bruno's, was having been born a century too soon, or half a century too late. Had they flourished in the earlier half of the sixteenth century, they might have indulged their passion for Nature and for liberty without much danger. Their lot was unhappily cast at a period when Romish intolerance, excited by the rapid growth of Protestantism, and stimulated by the zeal of the new-born sons of Loyola, attained an intensity and malignity by which it had rarely been characterized before.

TREVOR. In estimating the Reformation teachers, we must not forget the influence of the milder spirits among them. Erasmus and Melanchthon must be paired off against Calvin and Luther. The former were as gentle, moderate, and semi-sceptical, as the latter were stern, haughty, and fiercely dogmatic. Nor in fairness must we overlook 'the rock whence they were hewn.' In one sense Protestantism is the offspring of Romanism; and it would have been curious if she had not manifested some of the lineaments of her parent. To all religious parties alike, the toleration of an adverse mode of thought appeared, at that time, a wanton sacrifice of truth; and therefore criminal. Of course, as Protestantism grew, it was able in some measure to assert more fully the principle which presided at its birth—the right of private judgment.

[1] 'Intolerant as the Italian Inquisition,' says Cousin (*Hist. Gen.*, p. 233) Mr. Harrington's comparison is not quite so severe. It seems unnecessary at this time of day to adduce proofs of the truth of this statement. The English reader may be referred to Disraeli's chapter on literary controversy in his well-known work, *Curiosities of Literature*.

MISS LEYCESTER. Whence we have the well-known Romish sarcasm:—That a Protestant is in reality a skeptic, and that the main effect of the Protestant Reformation was to substitute ten thousand infallibilities for one.

HARRINGTON. Of course a Protestant is a protester; his attitude, so far as the name is concerned, is pure divergence or hostility, and the word is therefore a synonym of skeptic. Schultze, the great German skeptic, called Skepticism 'the Protestantism of Philosophy.' The latter is a stock objection of all autocrats, political as well as religious. They are careful to forget how the ten thousand infallibles, correct, modify, and even neutralize each other, so that a consciousness of fallibility and mutual forbearance is an inevitable and wholesome result. The right of private judgment, implied ironically in such an ascription of infallibility, may be termed the intellectual franchise of most modern Europeans. Like the political franchise, it does not follow that each of its possessors will use it wisely or discreetly, but it is none the less certain that its possession is an inalienable right, or that it confers advantages, moral and social as well as political and religious, which are inestimable.

TREVOR. There is another argument to be urged in behalf of religious intolerance in every age of Christianity, *i.e.* it seemed to its purblind advocates to have a Divine sanction.

MRS. ARUNDEL. What do you mean, Doctor? It certainly has none in the teaching of Christ.

TREVOR. Of that I am aware; but it is found in the Old Testament. Joshua's warfare against the Canaanites, or Jehu's destruction of the Baal worshippers,[1] were not so absolutely dissimilar from such events as the crusade of Innocent III. against the Albigenses, or the massacre of St. Bartholomew, that the perpetrators of the latter atrocities could not plead the former for their justification.

[1] As one instance out of many in which this unfortunate precedent for religious intolerance has been employed, may be cited the apologies of Catholic preachers after the foul butchery of Vassi, the first overt act in the religious wars of France in the sixteenth century; when, says Martin, they glorified the massacre 'after the example of Moses who commanded to kill without exception all those who had adored the golden calf; and of Jehu who, with the same zeal, caused the death of two kings, and one hundred and twelve princes, and gave Queen Jezebel to dogs to eat.'—Martin, *Histoire de France*, ix., p. 114.

ARUNDEL. Unluckily, Christians have never discriminated so clearly and fully as they ought between the 'It was said by them of old time,' and the authoritative 'I say unto you' of their Master; so that Christianity has been made responsible for acts of cruelty and violence dictated by the theocratic fanaticism of a Hebrew prophet, or by the absolutist ideas of an oriental despot. Even in the present day the clergy have frequently to meet the appeal of Bible-reading parishioners to Jewish exclusiveness or superstition. I have known cases, *e.g.*, in which the maledictions of the 109th Psalm [1] have been invoked as a kind of magical curse on the head of a supposed enemy; while the witch of Endor is a perennial precedent for the possible existence and supernatural power of her weird sisterhood.

MRS. HARRINGTON. My small experience among the poor of this neighbourhood would hardly lead me to think that they lay so much stress on the Old as on the New Testament. The Gospels I find to be their favourite reading; with perhaps a Psalm occasionally.

HARRINGTON. The relation of the Old and New Testaments is a very large subject, which we had better avoid. As a layman I should say that while the two books are so joined together by historical continuity, as well as in other respects, that a separation between them would be undesirable even if possible, at the same time a complete assimilation of contents and authority would seem much more practically mischievous.

TREVOR. For thoughtless and uncultured people perhaps. For others, human instincts, common sense, social needs, the numberless subtle influences which conduce to and constitute what we call by the complex term civilization, are powerful antagonistic influences to extreme or cruel dogmatic conclusions, though they are influences which do not receive their due credit from theologians. But it is getting late, so we will close our discussion on Vanini and intolerance.

[1] In parts of North Devon the devout recital of this Psalm, when kneeling, is supposed to constitute an important part of the operation of 'witching' any one.

ERRATA

NOT OTHERWISE INCIDENTALLY CORRECTED IN THE INDEXES.

p. 3, l. 13, *for* Macchiavelli *read* Machiavelli. *This misprint is repeated up to p.* 160, *passim; and on* p. 221, l. 19.
„ 14, „ 25, *for* and to which *read* to which.
„ 35, „ 11, *for* Geography *read* Cosmography.
„ 49, „ 24, *for* from henceforth *read* henceforth.
„ 51, „ 19, *for* inpossibilities *read* impossibilities.
„ 106, „ 25, *for* omnipetent *read* omnipotent.
„ 128, „ 27, *for* litterateur *read* littérateur.
„ 136, „ 18, *for* seems *read* seem.
„ 141, „ 15, *for* and with which *read* with which.
„ 152, „ 30, *for* Lorenzo di Medicis *read* Lorenzo de' Medici.
„ 168, „ 27, *for* Forence *read* Florence.
„ 218, „ 43, *for* de er das Gute *read* da er das Gute.
„ 258, „ 20, *for* same category with *read* same category as.
„ 269, „ 10, *for* seem *read* seems.
„ 271, „ 16, 39, *for* Henry *read* Henri.
„ 359 (n. 3), *for* letter of Lake *read* letter of Wake.
„ 360, l. 10, *for* and which *read* which.
„ 407, „ 13, *for* 19th of February *read* 9th of February.
„ 416, „ 20, *for* literray *read* literary.

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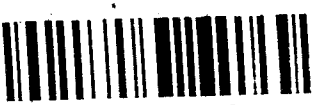

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